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MAY 1988

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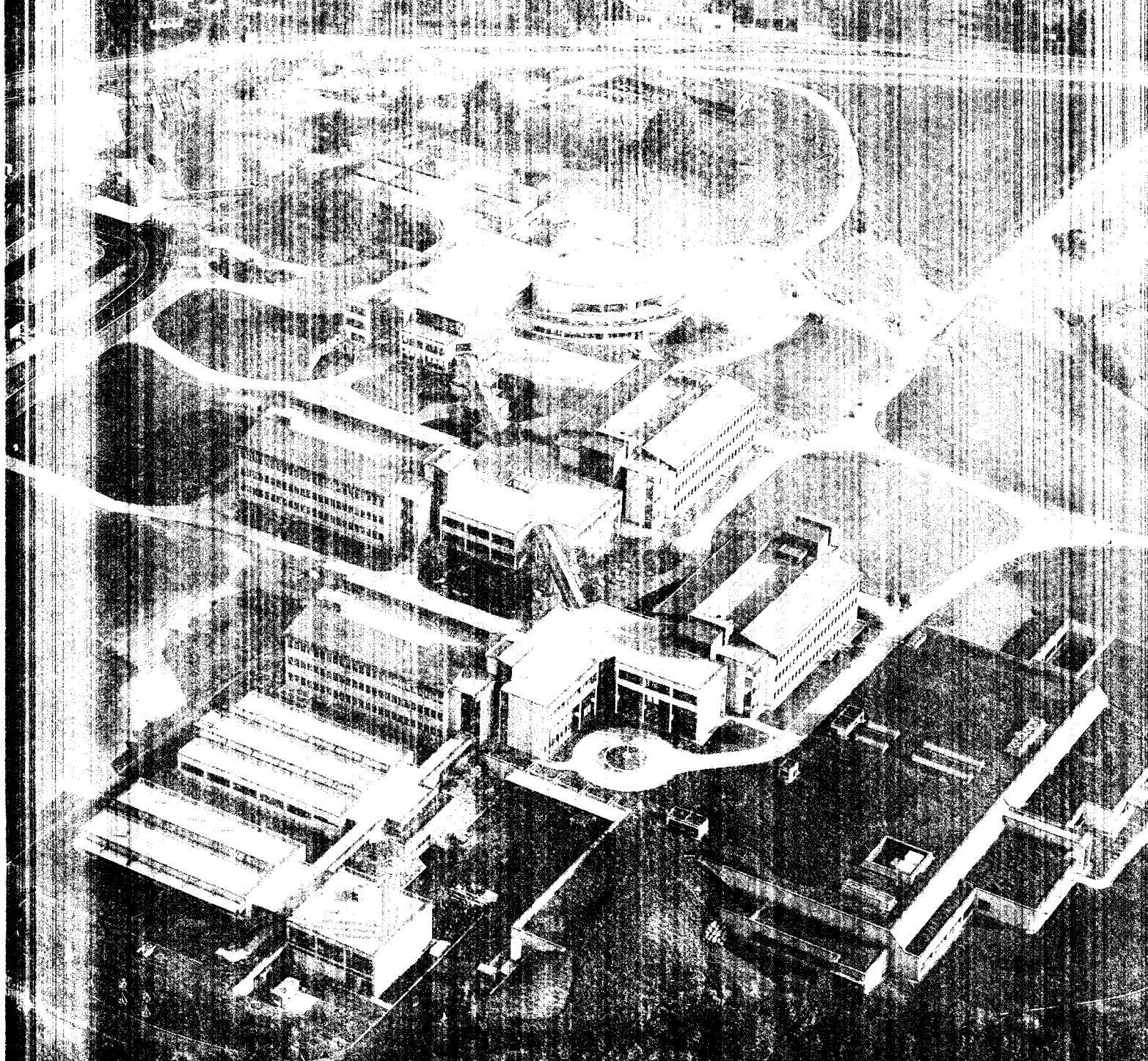
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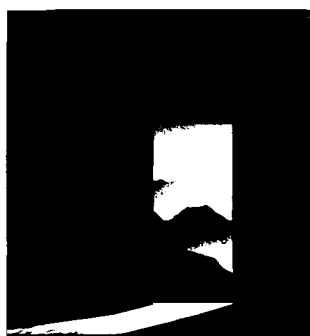
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On the Eve of an Hispanic Heyday

By *JEAN-FRANÇOIS REVEL*



IF THE CULTURAL SUCCESS of a vanished empire is measured by the number of persons for whom its language has become their mother tongue, the Spanish Empire undoubtedly represents one of the greatest triumphs in the history of cultural transfers.

Wherever Hispanic civilisation made landfall, it remained a lively presence long

after the imperial force behind it had retreated. Today nearly 300 million human beings speak Spanish—the fourth largest language-group after Chinese, English, and Hindi. Since a further 155 million of our contemporaries speak Portuguese (eighth largest, the Francophone group being the twelfth), clearly the Iberian peninsula bows only to the British Isles as the part of Europe that has made the most lasting impression on the rest of the world.

Granted, language is not the whole of civilisation, but it is its surest and toughest vehicle. The same classical authors furnish the educational resources in Lima as in Mexico, in Buenos Aires as in Caracas, in Lisbon as in São Paulo. Repaying the debt to the old mother country, modern Latin-American authors figure in student syllabuses in Madrid and Seville, and the students do not have to switch languages in order to study them. It is the same Spanish, despite countless variants of pronunciation and peculiarities of vocabulary and expression—which in fact are less noticeable than those distinguishing the French speech of Marseille from that of Lille. Other factors reinforce this cultural unity, notably a homogeneity of religion such as exists virtually nowhere else outside the Arab world.

This social vitality, this spiritual awareness of “Hispanicity” took root in time with the former colonies’ attainment of independence in the early 19th century. Oddly, the Hispanic world has coexisted rather than mingled with the Portuguese enclave, both the little one in Europe and the very large one—Brazil—in South America. Economic links between the two zones are necessarily close, cultural links and psychological and political similarities much less so. Hispano-America is not the whole of Latin America. The

Portuguese-speaking section of the continent has a less tragic, bloody, and violent past than the Hispanic sections. I noted that in the office of the President of the United States of Brazil, a portrait of the last Emperor occupies a place of honour—a token, I imagine, to the country’s gentler changes of régime.

Today, the Hispanic world is enjoying a late 20th century renewal, a revival, a spurt of growth. More than that, however, it is experiencing a metamorphosis, a qualitative mutation. What is involved is, I suspect, a change of direction rather than any kind of enlargement. So what is this radical transformation? It is best expressed in very simple terms. For all its vigour, Hispanic self-awareness has for two centuries been an unhappy state of mind, a consciousness of failure. Now, while avoiding North-American-style congenital optimism, South American self-awareness has become if not a paradise, at least a purgatory in which positive factors outweigh negative; being saved is no longer out of the question, and some self-esteem is permissible at last—not, as before, in dreams and literature alone but in action and reality.

FOR ALTHOUGH the Hispanic world has always, from the end of the colonial era around 1800 until today, looked upon itself as a community, that community cannot be said to have had much to boast about (even if it never admitted as much). For a century-and-a-half the former mother country passed through a dark period of its history. The governments of 19th-century Spain scarcely embodied the quintessence of the art of politics. Things did not get much better in the 20th century, when the Civil War was followed by 35 years of Francoism. The Spanish economy and Spanish social arrangements lagged well behind the rest of Europe. Spain’s cultural activity (novelists, poets, philosophers) was far from feeble; but, fairly or unfairly, the major centres of intellectual and artistic production and distribution lay elsewhere. Excommunicated politically, marginalised culturally, and bogged-down economically, *la matrice de l’hispanité* offered her descendants few sources of inspiration or reasons for pride. For two long centuries Latin America endured the alienation that came from feeling it was the province of a province.

A SECOND KIND OF ALIENATION was of its own doing. In the last century—as indeed in this one—it became clear as time went on that Latin America was incapable of taking its place in the modern age, whether politically, economically, or culturally. The political life of the continent swung between “Caudillism”, civil wars, terrorism, dictatorships, and revolutions that were not revolutions at all but only blood-lettings. Moreover, in every country (except little Costa Rica) the Army constituted an autonomous hub of decision, arrogating to itself the right to seize national power every time it felt the civilians were no longer capable or worthy of wielding it. A similar archaism dominated most economies, which were run by the political classes for their own benefit, in the context of a system of institutionalised corruption within which it was impossible for genuine entrepreneurs to operate.

Lastly, Latin-American culture remained dependent on Europe and North America, which produced a persistent sense of inferiority coupled with an aggressive chauvinism. Intellectuals pretended to despise the foreign cultures they imitated, laying claim to an originality that was nine parts rejection—and has very properly been dubbed “negative national identity”.¹

However, the last fifteen years or so have seen a turn-around in the Iberian world both in fact and in terms of people’s awareness. Positive values have begun to get the better of negative ones; self-confidence has started to prevail over feelings of inferiority, pride to supplant vanity. The first thing that happened in Europe was that the two former colonial powers threw off their dictatorships and became democracies. The change-over was dramatic in the case of Portugal, though it passed off without serious violence. In Spain’s case it was a splendidly serene affair, a *tour de force* of boldness mingled with wisdom. Spain’s previous contributions to the international lexicon of political science had all been on the lugubrious side. The Spanish words *junte*, *guerilla*, *golpe*, *caudillo*, and *pronunciamiento* were not particularly evocative of civilised solutions.

After 1976 the word *transición* came into use. Referring to Spain’s “passage to democracy”, it acquired the value of a model, a glorious example offering the ideal method for passing from a dictatorship to a democracy without a civil war, without the imposition of a state of seige, without the army playing an unconstitutional role, and without either proscriptions or anarchy.

THAT MODEL made a great impression on Latin America. The members of the democratic opposition in Chile are very ready to tell one that they are looking for the personalities and parties that will be capable of launching “*transición*”. No further explanation is needed: everyone knows that the reference is to Spain: the old mother country has recovered her moral authority. The spell of the Spanish model has even

worked in practice. There were peaceful transitions from military to civilian, constitutional rule in Peru in 1980, in Bolivia in 1982, in Uruguay in 1984, and in Brazil in 1985. (What made Argentina’s experience in 1983 less peaceful was the combination of the Falklands War and the cruelty of the toppled régime.)

Suddenly we find ourselves in a situation that almost defies belief: apart from four countries—Chile, Paraguay, Nicaragua, and Cuba—virtually the whole of Latin America is, for the first time in its history, governed by democracy. Granted, such democracy is often of a somewhat rough-and-ready kind, and it is invariably fragile. But nearly the whole of the continent is, at any rate, free of dictatorship. Even some of the tiny and highly unstable countries of Central America—Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador (notwithstanding an interminable civil war)—have muddled through to one-man-one-vote elections. We are discovering in retrospect the merits of such countries as Venezuela, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic, where over the last 20 to 30 years, while Europe’s attention was focused on Castro and on Allende, democratic régimes have been patiently implanted and successfully reared in difficult conditions.

WE ARE ALSO DISCOVERING what I shall call “Rangel’s Law”, as formulated by Carlos Rangel in his book *From Noble Savage to Good Revolutionary* (1976) and repeatedly corroborated since. This states that, on every occasion in Latin America when the people, the real people, are free to vote in unrigged elections, they choose the moderate solutions put forward by the Centre parties, whether of the Left or of the Right. In other words, the legendary extremism of Latin America is an élitist phenomenon. The “Fascist” army officers and “revolutionary” intellectuals who have been fighting each other for power for two centuries, both represent oligarchies eager to satisfy their ambitions for domination (not to mention their pecuniary appetites). The peoples whose aspirations they falsely claim to be expressing reject such oligarchies as soon as they are given the chance. In recent years they have shown a far greater degree of political maturity than they had previously been thought to possess.

Seen against the background of this modernisation process, the Mexican system, long credited with merits it was in fact far from possessing, suddenly looks a bit dated with its blend of *gauchisante* phraseology, authoritarian practices, and the monopoly of power by a single party for the past 50 years behind a smoke-screen of electoral sleight of hand. Latin American democracy doubtless has more dizzy spells to come—but the Hispanic revival has made sure that never again will they be regarded as normal.

WHAT MAKES THIS doubly sure is the fact that Latin American culture, too, having been or believing itself to be a provincial affair, is now one of the most cosmopolitan—indeed, in my view, probably the most cosmopolitan of our time. It is not unusual to come across intellectuals in South America (most of them are trilingual) who

¹ Jeffrey W. Barret, *Impulse to Revolution in Latin America* (New York, 1985). See also my discussion with Octavio Paz in *ENCOUNTER* (July-August 1986), “After the Cultural Delirium”.

are as much in touch with what is going on in the USA as are the Americans, and as well informed as a Frenchman or Italian about European affairs. In fact they will know more than the Frenchman knows about things Italian and more than the Italian about things French. This turnaround has transformed weakness into strength—creative strength. There is no longer anything marginal about Latin American literature. It no longer constitutes a reflection but a source. Original, copious, and immensely varied, it combines the particularism of its roots with the universalism of its human significance. The writers of this transatlantic Hispanic world, “distant descendants of the West”, as the distinguished Mexican poet and philosopher Octavio Paz said in a recent article, “have turned their disadvantages into advantages. . . .” Now, it is often they who see European and American intellectuals as provincial, not to say ethnic—cut off from any sense of the universal.

To be sure, the lower clergy of the Latin American intelligentsia and even members of its episcopate continue to display certain inveterate shortcomings. They tend to be conformist and verbose—“opportunists”, as Octavio Paz put it, adding: “The old establishment was of the Right, the current one is of the Left. That is a fact of life in Mexico for anyone who wants to get on in the universities or make a career in journalism.” However, most of the great minds of Hispanic culture have broken with “the 17th-century theological thought that drove them to idolise the political orthodoxies of the 20th century. . . .”

And let us not make the mistake of concentrating only on the stars. More important than the ideological arguments is the fact that the Latin American masses have virtually wiped out illiteracy. Adult illiteracy fell from 42.2% in 1950 to 16.9% in 1985 (the latest UNESCO figures, largely accounted for by the still high proportion of non-Spanish-

speaking Indians in Peru, Bolivia, and Guatemala). Compare this figure with the 53% adult-illiteracy rate still obtaining in Africa and the 41% figure for Asia, and you will see that it is no longer possible to categorise Latin America as underdeveloped, especially when you know that its illiterate women (18.4%) do not greatly outnumber the men (15.4%)—a classic indicator of cultural “take-off”.

ADMITTEDLY its economic failure (though very relative and not a little ambiguous) still gives us occasion to take a pessimistic view of certain aspects of the Hispanic world. But even here its poverty in relation to the United States has itself become a factor in the expansion of its culture. Hispanics in North America today form a lively, fast-growing community. Economic emigrants, notably from Mexico, have been joined by political refugees from Cuba and, more recently, from Nicaragua. In parts of California, in New Mexico, and in Florida, Spanish is spoken as widely as (and sometimes more widely) English. In Miami (where Spanish-speaking residents can easily get by knowing no English at all) the *Diario Las Americas* now rivals the *Miami Herald*—and does so the more brilliantly for the fact that, unlike the latter, it is not just a regional newspaper. It is read by Hispanics throughout the United States, and is distributed in several Central and South American countries—I have seen it even in Spain. Its team of leader-writers includes as many North Americans as Hispanics and as many Europeans as Latin Americans.

Having passed from mythology which merely consoled and compensated to full cultural maturity, the Hispanic world has won back the means of becoming a major civilised power. The only question now is: Does it have the ambition to match?

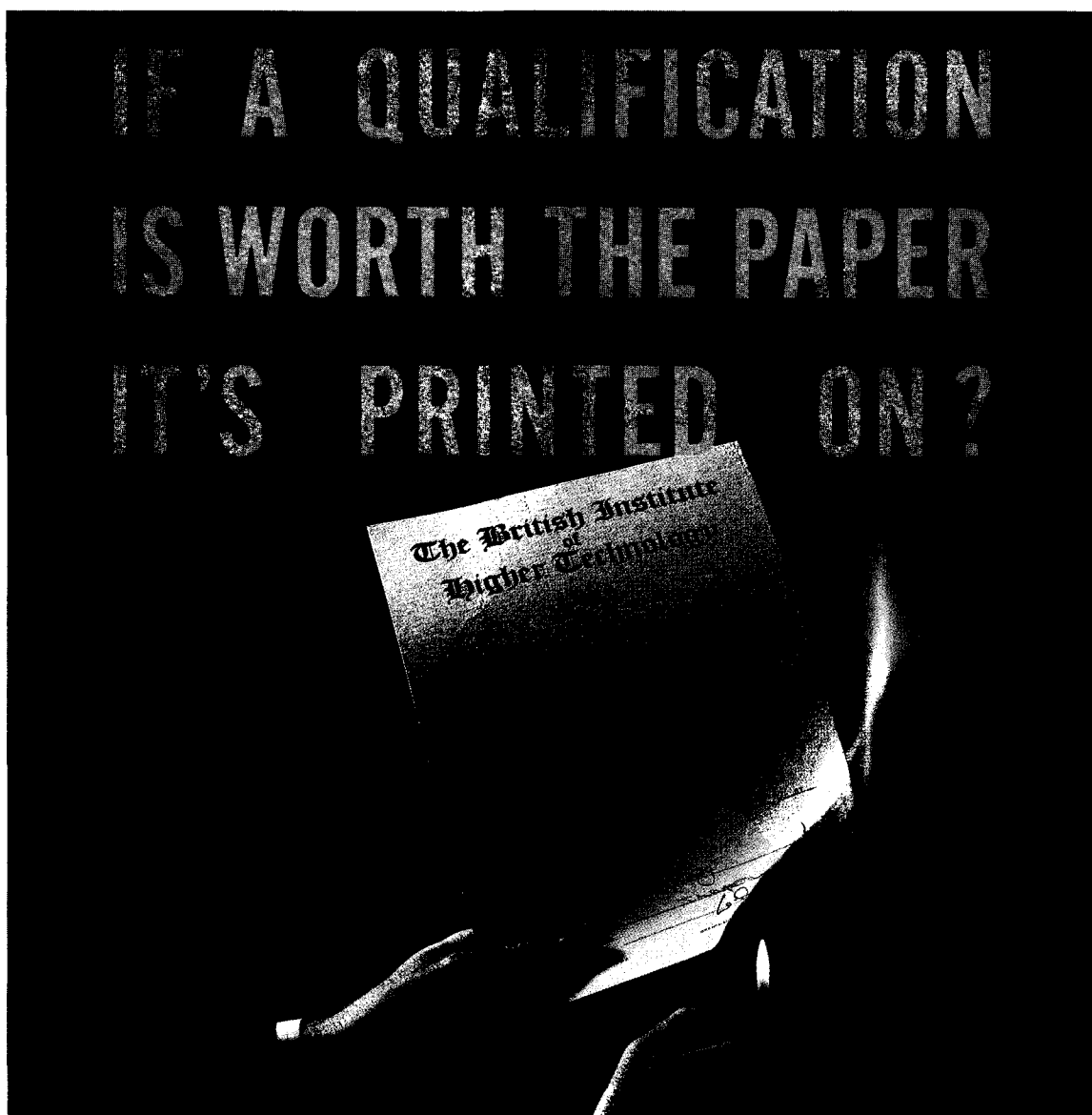
Bedside Manners

How little the dying seem to need—
A little food perhaps, an occasional drink,
A smile, a hand to hold, medication,
A change of clothes, an unspoken
Understanding about what's happening.
You think it would be more, much more,
Something more difficult for us
In this massive lurching disruption,
But perhaps it's because as the huge shape
Rears up higher and darker each hour
They somehow think we should see it too
And just try to show us with a hand-squeeze.

We panic to do more for them,
And especially when it's your father,
And his eyes are far away, and your tears
Are all down your face and clothes,
And he doesn't see them now, but smiles
A little perhaps because you're there.
How little he needs. Just love. More love.

Christopher Wiseman

HOW CAN YOU TELL
IF A QUALIFICATION
IS WORTH THE PAPER
IT'S PRINTED ON?



Each year, nearly two million vocational qualifications are awarded in Britain.

They are awarded at almost every level, in almost every field. From accountancy to welding.

Now while some are valuable to employers, others apply standards that are out of touch with the real needs of work.

Too many qualifications still over-emphasize theory at the expense of practice.

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The result is confusion. You, as an employer, can't tell just how well qualified job applicants really are.

Or which qualifications would improve the performance of your existing staff.

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To make the system effective and employment-led.

This is done by consulting both employer and employee organisations.

They tell us the standards at work that qualifications need to meet.

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Because if the qualification system doesn't work, it's not just your employees who get their fingers burnt.

It's you as well.

For more information on the new generation of qualifications, write to the NCVQ, 222 Euston Road, London NW1 2BZ.



James Thurlby

The Mill-Race

FOR THE BOY, August was a cruel month. It was the distance between two parents, rooted like infected trees forty miles apart in a landscape which, between, offered nothing but small, pugnacious towns without pattern. Lanes that squirmed away like worms. A few trapped fields. A coal mine where black minstrels with white eye-sockets emerged from their warrens on the bony hillsides. The valleys below linked by canals as still as mirrors.

He lived with his mother, watching and loving and fearing the pale vulnerable face, with the staring, defiant eyes, the head thrown back, the small chin thrust forward. Elegance and mania mixed. Had he not seen her walking in the rain thus, face upturned not merely to catch the sluicing downfall but to welcome it, to be assimilated by it? Hair, tailed and trailing. Clothes soaked and clinging to her thin frame. Like a priestess drunk in her own garden. Her laughter had hardly penetrated through the windows. Once—before the stroke—he had seen his father's face reflected in the glass. His eyes which had seen bodies torn in battle and had learned to live with that, were like painted eggs, fixed and fearful.

Should he not cross this no-man's-land to the nursing home forty miles away where the father was held defensively in the fist of his own family? Stockade already built and manned by aunts and uncles armed with maledictions. To them, his mother was already out of her reason. No one could talk with a woman like that. What of the boy? Contaminated, no doubt. (They said nothing of the father's rages, how the house had been shaken by his shouts. Why should they? It was not their function to see both points of view.) What had happened to his mother's family? Melted away like snow—or slush—at the first hint of mental illness.

He knew his mother did not want him to go. As the summer progressed he wanted only to stay with her.

Man in a bed. Knots of pain deep inside his white chest. His nose was pinched, his stubble black over waxy skin. Only the corona of his bald head looked lively. The skirt of hair curled up like that of a child. One arm lay on the green counterpane. Occasionally he massaged the white fingers with his other hand.

A river flowed past the nursing home. The man watched endlessly the wide eddies of the green water.

They fascinated him. They went to God. Eternally moving—a route to quietude.

Yet, she had the boy. He wanted him. He felt the rage well up within him, making one set of fingers shake.

LETTERS CAME from his son, but the boy said nothing. He wrote almost entirely about cricket at school, or, when that finished, Herbert Sutcliffe's centuries for Yorkshire. The man thought back fiercely to Third Ypres and read in the papers about the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany. Europe was crumbling again—so soon. The marriage he had dreamed of in the trenches was already wrecked. And there was still cricket. Incomprehensible!

The boy's mother, of course, never wrote. She rested her case on the strangely calm but wayward accusations she had uttered night after night when they had still lived together. Her last disdainful arrow had come, inadvertently, by the boy. Yes, the boy had, at least, visited him in the local hospital—before his move to the nursing home. His mother, he said, thought his father's illness was a sham.

He stirred angrily. She had woven webs of mischief around the boy all summer. He must be got out.

The solicitor said, "We know she is very concerned about the boy. It is possible that an argument to the effect that you can educate him more satisfactorily. . . ."

The sentences that stopped, leaving questions. The sharp face above the very white collar, the circumlocution, the care with which he formulated the words, proofed against emotion. "We know. . . ." Who were *we*? The father wished to ask, but didn't. He simply nodded.

He said huskily, "I want to go back to my home, but not if she is there."

The even flow of the legal voice.

"You can have your wife evicted, of course, although, these days, many think this is hardly just. But it is still the law. You must maintain her if you separate. Perhaps you could offer her alternative accommodation. . . .?"

Into this, then, had a dream descended. The man longed to be able to go down to the river and lower himself gently into it, moving out among the dark whorls and thus onward to the anonymity of the sea.

THE BOY watched from his hide among the lilac bushes when the solicitor came. The visitor's conversations with his mother were conducted, at first through a letter-box and then through a narrowly opened window. Afterward, his mother was distraught. She told him, "Your father wants to come back here in the autumn. If he comes I shall go. He says he will rent me a flat. You shall come with me, dear."

That seemed satisfactory to him. It was like a game, in a way. All summer he had helped to make the house and garden into a fortress. A heavy walking-stick lay on the sideboard. There was a crude padlock on the inside of the back door. Was it really true, as his mother said, that his father sent people to spy on them?

But, later, she said, weeping, "You must go to your father, darling. I shall not be able to give you a proper schooling. He can."

"I won't leave you", he cried.

But she was very calm now, abandoned to the terrible beauty of self-sacrifice.

She said, "Your father will give you a good education. When you grow up, become a lawyer and fight for justice."

What justice should he fight for? The justice of demented women against sick men?

Out of the rear window of the car that took him away he watched her standing by the gate, tweedy, cardigan, oddly shaped, lined face bearing an expression of quiet resolution worn shakily over despair. He cried for forty miles. It is not much. Some people cry all their lives. He carried some tomatoes in a brown paper bag that burst. His few clothes and personal things were in a small brown case made out of compressed cardboard. Scuffed waves of the grey cardboard spurted through the brown varnish of the exterior.

The man who drove him—a slightly mesmerised friend—talked to him kindly all the way, like a Sunday School teacher.

When they had made the journey, and the boy had climbed out of the car, the hot August evening seized him, wringing from him more and more tears. He felt quaintly thin. His legs were sticks. His cousins giggled at his cardboard case.

"Come to leech on to your father, have you?" his uncle demanded. "Found out which side your bread's buttered, eh?"

"My mother sent me", he said. His words came out like blobs of cotton wool, wringing wet.

"You're just a mercenary little beggar, aren't you?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"I mean you didn't come because you wanted to be with your father, did you?"

"No—yes—I don't know. . . ."

"Leave the boy alone", his aunt said. "How is he supposed to know who to go to?"

She spoke firmly, looking at him with compassion. He wanted her to hold him to her as his mother had done forty miles ago.

Oh, the white lips, the brave smile, the waving hand, the crumpled figure being sucked away from him, the untidy dot from which the road of his life had begun. Never again. Never again to be like that. With her. The summer months of trusting, believing, protecting. Fighting off intruders. But she had wanted him to go. Because it was best for him. Why had he not stayed so that it could have been the worst for him? They could have bought a tent and slept on the heath. With the dogs.

Now he faced the bodyguard. They were much more antagonistic than his father, the king they surrounded. There were only two exceptions: the aunt—and his grandfather. The rest? Their faces were made of metal, unsmiling, eyes bright with suspicion.

HIS FATHER was angry with him at first, interrogating him repeatedly, lecturing him about his duty. What was his duty? Inside, he ached and was afraid. He tried to hide what he felt. His father said, "Don't be sullen, boy."

"Be patient. Wait a little while", said grandfather, who had discovered the wisdom of patience in dealing with grandmother.

Grandfather was a tanner. He was a small man with a red-veined face. His white body was lumpy with muscles. For years he had pirouetted on planks between vats of boiling grease and water, flicking hides through the air like kites. The boy loved him. He was continuity. There had never been a time when he had not loved his grandfather. After he had been there for a while, he wanted to love his father, too; to comfort him. His father's face was so tired. He had not realised how tired—how afraid—his father was, how wide his eyes, how fixed his gaze.

So, he was a rebel for only so long. August does not smile on rebels. It is busy undermining the summer, conditioning people to the possibility of the year's eclipse. Burning, dehydrating, pushing its dust about in small, hot clouds of ennui.

He moved from his uncle's house to that of his grandparents. He sidled by the river, watching the waters move like eels among the reeds, fascinated and frightened by the fury of the mill-race near the old mill. He caught sticklebacks and put them in jars. His grandmother, who thought she saw a spirit world through the looking-glass in the sitting-room, was not pleased when she found he had filled the sink with water and had emptied the fish into it. She gave him an old round tin. It had had paint in it. All the fish died. It was a small thing. Oddly, it was the catalyst.

His grandfather told his father. All three sat together in the nursing-home bedroom. His father looked like a propped white god, a massive fruit. But he smiled when he heard about the fish in the sink. There was a moment of unaccountable leaping in the boy's breast. An arm was held out to him from the bed. Amid the embarrassing tears of this grown man the boy buried his face in the dark hairs of the damp chest.

HE THOUGHT BACK to it many times. The three of them there in that small, untidy room, smelling of medications and old meals. His father's brimming eyes. His grandfather's bright blue; skin taught over cheekbones. Generations. Somewhere beyond the room, along the river of their family history, other links in the chain. His grandfather had shown him a faded brown photograph he kept in a frame on the mantelpiece of the sitting-room. An old man in an even older top hat, sitting on a chair outside a cottage, beside an old lady, crinkled, black-laced. Both looked suspicious, pantomimic. Expressions rigid. Faces rough, almost battered. Hard, substantial kitchen chairs, splayed at the back like the spokes of a wheel. A cottage door low enough to knock your head off. Great-great-grandparents. And back. And back. To where? Where did it all start?

He could discern nothing clearly. The vistas both up and down the river, toward its source and toward its meeting with the sea (and he borne upon its moving surface) fascinated him; gave him some stability. Somewhere, a future lay. He wept still at the memory of the waving hand, his mother's face; his heart faltered at the thought of the menace of the silent house. Forty miles away. How fearful she, too, must be.

But while he wept, he wept less. August dried his tears. He went on the river in a rowing-boat.

The picnic was announced. They would all have a picnic by the river. Father would be driven out in his Armstrong-Siddeley and then put in his wheelchair. His son would attend to him. There was a pride in doing it. Uncle Barry, who drank, came. It was an embarrassment. Grandfather had to escort him home. There was Aunt Lucille, whose face was as bland as a detached suburban house and whose tongue as thin as string. And Uncle Ralph, who never spoke. And others. Smiling and eating.

HE DID NOT LEARN until after the picnic that that had been the day when the man had called on his mother with a letter from the solicitor. A long time afterwards he learned that it had offered her the promised flat. But she had not opened it. She ran, weeping, down the road to a neighbour's. The tragedy had happened without him having been aware of

it. Distanced by forty miles. Hedges, ditches, farms, trees, cows, fields, rivers, towns, shops, buses, railways, telegraph poles. Not possible to see. Only imagine. His father tried to explain what had happened. For a while the tears came again when he heard—but, strangely, did not shake him so brutally as before.

He was surprised. He wanted to hear her arguing with the man, shouting at him. But he could not. Only in his imagination. The distance was filled with an emptiness that abolished all sound of what had occurred.

August had run its course. The distraught beauty of the year's certain death came with September. Winds rippled the summer from the smooth waters of the river. Flowers, once tall, were spreadeagled like stars in the sharp rains. A wildness seemed to grow about him, a disorder, a fever that preceded an unknown action. But nothing happened. The solicitor came and went, enunciating his precisions. The boy went to see a film with tigers in it. How much more beautiful were these animals than human beings.

For a while he did not even know where his mother was. Then, a telegram, from a town only ten miles away. At her sister's. Would he come to see her? It was agreed.

As he was leaving his father said, "Ask her. . . ."

The boy waited. The words forced themselves out.

"Ask your mother if she has anything to say to me."

His father did not indicate that he had anything to say to his mother.

He travelled on the bus, down the valleys, creeping into the hills. October was here now. The woods lay upon the hillsides as if protecting them, armies sheltered by shields of gold and bronze. But there was a quietness about them, a resignation, that was unmistakable. The boy knew he was surrounded by the beauty of dying. He thought his father was dying and felt afraid.

The bus rattled and rocked. The conductor teased him kindly, calling him an explorer. The boy made a kingdom for himself on his seat, arranged around his battered case, opened to reveal ruler, pencil, writing book, a tennis ball, his sheath knife, some socks, a shirt, pants, some handkerchiefs and a tie. In one corner, in greaseproof paper, some sandwiches made by his aunt. He read a boys' adventure magazine.

It was Saturday. The world whisked by behind dusty hedgerows. Passengers came and went, bulky with shopping. He and the bus-conductor went on forever. He was enfolded in a totally private world. The world of his travelling. It was his shield. Like the woods.

He had no idea how he would react to his mother. That was too hard a thing to know. Two months had passed. He longed for a revival of the intimacy they had experienced. But he sensed that that could not be.

He had almost come to see the situation between his mother and his father as something not involving him. He was just a pawn, like those on the chess-board at his father's bedside, of little consequence, moving between the strangely childish figures of royalty.

WHEN HE MET his mother at the bus station he realised that a profound change had occurred in her. He wanted to run to her but he could not. He was shy and gauche. She was withdrawn, yet at the same time talkative, asking many questions. He knew at once that she now distrusted him.

The magic bond of the earth which had existed between them in the summer had dissolved. That was of another period, encapsulated in the past. His mother was no longer gardeny and wild-haired, part of the wind. She was dressed up, wearing her fur, using perfume. She was, somehow disguised. She fussed over him but there was no real contact. He drew back. They stayed with the aunt, his mother's sister. It was nice but spooky. The aunt had a round sphere of glass in which she foretold the future. It seemed nonsense to him. His aunt said he was going to be a lawyer and his mother nodded approvingly. He did not want to be a lawyer. The wind sidled through the old house like a mewing cat.

His voice trembled when he asked his mother: "Dad wanted to know if you had anything to say to him."

He was afraid she would be angry but she was not. Her face went very still and taut as if she had been struck a blow but did not intend to retaliate.

She said, almost inaudibly, "Nothing."

He cried when they parted but he did not experience anything like the desolation he had known when he had

been driven away in the car two months before. A numbness was growing where once there had been hurt. It was like a grey blanket in his chest.

Evening fell and he peered from the bus trying to locate the farms on the hillsides. One by one their windows became orange squares. He felt a sense of reassurance. They challenged the dusk.

AT THE TERMINUS the engine of the bus sputtered and died as he stepped into the street. The town was quiet. Night and its pinprick lights lay about the valley. The sky seemed to be filled with stars.

He walked along the road toward his grandfather's house, past the mill-race. He did not look down, for the dark water was like the torrent of angry words in which his parents had drowned, leaving him as the only messenger between their silences.

The house was in darkness. His grandmother would be at church. His grandfather would be at the nursing home with his father, and he, too, must go there in a moment. But first he must visit the house. He unlocked the door with the key he had been given, and made his way to the sitting-room.

Then he switched on the light. On the mantelpiece was the photograph. In it he met his great-great-grandparents' steady eyes.

To An Old Professor

The shadow of your ageing head
has loitered often near these words,
neat pencilled notes still track the places
where your mind once squirrelled for its ecstasies.

A taste for excellence was what you sowed,
as often in the garden with the weight
of years upon you, eyes half-closed
and Dante slipping to your knee,

you'd wake and read aloud to me,
and words would come among my thoughts
as though my understanding danced at last
to their unrivalled leading.

At times the bronze chrysanthemums
would loll and stagger in the autumn heat
until your trembling hands
formed splints to bear their ragged heads.

And when we listened to a song-thrush in your trees
it tore great frenzies from a throat
accustomed to more reticence,
or when you picked a rose, it was of all
most singular, supremely gold. A gift
to make small humble things unique,
to colour and immortalise my world.

Heather Buck

Duncan Fallowell

Sir Sacheverell Sitwell at Weston Hall

A Conversation



IT IS ABOUT NOON on an icy February day. The sky is blue and sunshine sparkles in the landscape as we approach Weston, a small village deep in tractor mud, lost among fields in the uneventful county of Northamptonshire. The road is dominated by a long high wall which is the colour of bruises near the pavement, rising by degrees to a greyish, greenish gold. The wall leaves the main road, curves slowly round to the left under bare trees, and arrives at a pair of wrought-iron gates and a Victorian lodge. The gates are jewelled with frosted spiders' webs—among them is repeated the Greek motif of the acanthus leaf. From here a short drive over a humpback bridge leads between lawns and pools of snowdrops into a large square of gravel in front of Weston Hall.

It is not a large house and it is in good working order, 18th-century in atmosphere, gently gothicised at the beginning of the 19th; considerable outbuildings gather behind it; and there is about the composition something tongue-in-cheek, as if it might be the set for an Agatha Christie melodrama. Since 1930 this has been the home of Sir Sacheverell Sitwell, poet, traveller, writer of curious prose rhapsodies on artistic subjects, brother of Edith and Osbert, youngest, shyest, most buoyant of the three (indeed the only one of them still alive).

The door is opened by the housekeeper, Gertrude Stephenson. She is petite with curly grey hair and a soft voice, and wears a brooch at her neck, but her sweetness of manner conceals a sturdy character. Behind her in the hall, despite his years, bobs Sir Sacheverell, wearing what Wyndham Lewis once described as "Sachie's look of sedate alarm". He is surprisingly tall and thin: his frame winds about like a convolvulus *en route* to the ceiling. And when he doesn't look alarmed, he looks amused. He twinkles—quite different from the tight-lipped portrait by Graham Sutherland which hangs in the hall. He is generally ill-at-ease, alive, sensitive, and in the drawing-room says "Would you like a sherry or somefing? Those are jolly nice shoes. Aren't shoes a dreadful price now. . . . Were those expensive?"

"Mmm. I've had them four years."

"Have you really worn them four years? They still look new."

"I've worn them a lot."

"It's worth it in the end, isn't it, paying more. . . . What am I looking for? A cigarette. Oh, here we are. Do you want a cigarette?"

"No thank you. . . . What's that most incredible smell? . . ."

"Is there a lovely smell of some sort? I wouldn't know. Smoking destroys one's sense of smell."

"Yes . . . in the middle of my train of thought, I caught . . . this lovely sort of. . ."

"Perhaps it's that plant over there which I'm told smells very nice."

I approach a bush in a pot and have a good sniff. "Yes, it reminds me of being very young. It's the sort of smell you bump into when you're crawling about in the garden."

"It's supposed to be a first cousin of the orange blossom. . . . But I've not lost my sense of taste. Luckily. So long as that doesn't go. . . ."

THE DRAWING-ROOM is dull gold, dull pink, creamy and white, well-lit, comfortable, with portraits, books, plants and a grand fireplace in which logs flame and glow. There are photographs of two beautiful women on a table against the wall. A copy of the *Almanach de Gotha* lies carelessly on a *causeuse*.

"Do you grow fruit and flowers here?"

"We have pears and apples, and quite exotic fings like japonica apples which Gertrude makes the most wonderful jelly out of. And medlars—medlar jelly is frightfully good too", he says, subsiding into a dull-gold, winged chair beside the fire.

"The snowdrops are amazing. . . . They're my favourite flower."

"Yes, they really are the last word in elegance, aren't they?"

"Very beautiful. Very tough. Very subtle."

"Luckily I haven't had to buy any new shoes lately. I used to go to the last great shoemaker. He's dead now. But my younger son realised what a wonderful shoemaker he was and had a whole fleet of shoes built, and it's like having antiques

by Chippendale now. He could sell them for quite a large sum of money."

"I brought you some more of those chocolates, by the way."

He is flustered with pleasure and embarrassment by this, and mumbles, "Oh my goodness, thank you. They really are sensationally good . . . especially the white ones."

"They're Belgian."

GERTRUDE COMES IN to say that lunch is ready when we want it. She takes charge of the chocolates and adds in an aside, "I'm so grateful to you for introducing Mr Sachie to those chocolates. He adores them. Sometimes he won't eat—but he'll eat those. I tell everybody to bring them now."

"What's Gertrude saying? I rather missed it", he asks. Actually, he says "raver missed it", having the general peculiarity of pronouncing "th" as "v" or "f". (I'll indicate a few here and there.) His voice is produced not in the throat or nose but largely at the front of the mouth. Its tone is rich, not twittering or precious. The intonation is Edwardian, using throwaway idioms of the 1920s. Occasionally a rasp cuts across, and quite often short coughs. Sometimes he talks in very rapid spurts.

"You pronounce 'th' as 'v' or 'f'. Is that a Sitwell thing?"

"You noticed that, did you? I just don't hear it. My bruvver and sister never had it. And there wasn't a Sitwell way of speaking, not like there was a Bloomsbury one. They used to moon away on sofas in the most appalling manner."

"I wonder why Virginia Woolf went mad."

"I dunno. Er, it's always a mistake to mention it, because of relations, but I think it must have been in the family, you know, don't you?"

"Possibly. I think she was worshipped too much as well."

"And a lot of tiresome lesbian women were fond of her."

"Were they?"

"Well, I think so, yes. Got her worked up." His face creases with mirth, and a chuckle turns into a cough.

"And why do you think Nijinsky went mad?"

"Too much nervous excitement, don't you? Did I tell you that story about Diaghilev? My bruvver and I used often to have supper with Diaghilev at the Savoy. This was during the War—the First World War—and I was always having to catch the late night train, saying 'I must go, I've got to get back to Aldershot'. And Diaghilev said '*Alors, qu'est ce que c'est, cette Aldershot? C'est votre maîtresse?*' . . . He could hardly speak English, and my French is simply appalling. The only English words he was ever heard to speak were 'More chocolate pudding'. But I can read French very well. That's one thing I can do."

"I can't read it very well. I can speak it very badly."

"I can read it because foreign writers interested me mainly, when I was young."

"Which ones?"

"Most of them. Flaubert was a marvellous master, I think. And Balzac I used to like reading terrifically too. Flaubert's *Salammbô* is a wonderful masterpiece. Like a wonderful film. It's about Ancient Carthage. I found a translation of it—this is one of the sort of keystones of my childhood—in the Post Office in Eckington in Derbyshire where my family lived. It was an extraordinary find, in a way. It had an enor-

"Sachie"



SIR SACHEVERELL SITWELL was born in Scarborough in 1897, the youngest of the literary trio which included his sister Edith and brother Osbert. They were the offspring of an eccentric couple from Derbyshire, Sir George and Lady Ida Sitwell. Sir George bought the castle of Montegufoni, near Florence, and Italy formed part of the children's life. Sacheverell, or "Sachie" as he came to be called, was first a poet ("The People's Palace", 1918), publishing many volumes of verse on exotic, rarefied or theatrical themes which were refined into "Selected Poems" (1948).

In the 1920s he lived with his brother in Carlyle Square, Chelsea, and became familiar in the world of Picasso, Stravinsky, Cocteau and Diaghilev. "Façade", a series of poems by Edith Sitwell set to humorous music by William Walton, had its first performance in 1923 and made the Sitwells famous (something they used the photographer Cecil Beaton to underline).

BUT EQUALLY IMPORTANT to their legend was the publication in 1924 of Sacheverell Sitwell's "Southern Baroque Art". From now on the Sitwells were baroque people. It resembles not book that had gone before, a work of poetical not academic connoisseurship, ranging from Turkey through the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies to Spain and

Mexico, beautifully written in four parts which are like four high-focus dreams. He introduces a genuine strangeness to the English-speaking world without recourse to the imperial or expatriate option.

Profoundly English himself, there is yet no sense of the Britisher abroad (which even D. H. Lawrence did not manage to avoid) because he is not seeking to colonise or escape but to enjoy. In consequence, this heady, southern and delightful world comes drifting up to us, as if all by itself. Since then he has written many travel books and further rhapsodies and studies on artistic themes, though perhaps never again was the touch so elegantly controlled, the manner so new, and the subject so timely. In 1982 he published "An Indian Summer", a collection of poems written over the previous 30 years and previously available only in private editions.

SACHEVERELL SITWELL is one of those men of sensibility who move in a wider world and consider this entirely natural and right. Insularity, puritanism, philistinism, which all three Sitwells so set themselves against, continue to be the object of his good-natured scorn. On the death of Osbert in 1969 he inherited the baronetcy. Though 90, "Sachie" is a young spirit, his responses are singular and fresh, and he still lives at Weston Hall enjoying cigarettes and chocolates. He has written no memoirs; this article and the tape-recordings from which it is drawn constitute the only reminiscence.

D. F.

mous influence on me. The language was so wonderful.”
 “Do you know, I’ve never read Proust. It’s one of the things I’ve not done.”

“I haven’t read it since I was about 29. I started it when I was about 25.”

“And I’ve never read *1984* by George Orwell.”

“No, I’ve never read it either”, he says.

“You haven’t? I thought I was the only person who hadn’t. I haven’t read *Brave New World* either.”

“No, neither’ve I.”

“And I haven’t read *Lord of the Flies*.”

“Who wrote that?”

“William Golding. He won the Nobel Prize.”

“Has he really? I don’t know him. Now listen, there’s luncheon. . . .”

THE DINING-ROOM looks out to lawn, hedges, trees and snowdrops on two sides. We sit at one end of the dining-table, which is fairly long but not one of those very long ones. Gertrude has laid the starter in a dish, a salad of salmon and eggs and tomatoes, and we help ourselves.

“Have you been very busy writing lately?” he asks.

“I have.”

“I’ve rather stopped churning at the moment. You see, the ghastly thing is I’ve written 80 books, which is really too appalling, isn’t it?”

“How did you manage it?”

“Well, I always come down at half-past eight for breakfast. I usually wake up about seven, actually. Sometimes half-past six. Then I would sit upstairs in my bedroom, which is the only room in which I used to write, and write every morning until about half-past twelve. Then I have a siesta after luncheon. Then I would generally try in the evenings, after tea sort of fang, until about seven. But I’ve rather given that up lately.”

“Aren’t you still writing poems?”

“Yes. I was writing one this morning. But poetry is much less trouble than writing prose. You can write poems beside the fire, for example. You can sit very comfortably in a chair and meditate, and that sort of fang.”

“And poetry is very economical these days. Shorter poems.”

“It isn’t economical as far as proceeds go. I’ve never heard of anybody making a living out of writing poems. In fact it’s a dead loss where that’s concerned. Which is really the point of it, I suppose.” He chuckles and coughs simultaneously. “But the marvellous thing about *manuscripts* is that they count as chattels and therefore, if you sell them, you don’t have to pay any tax. For instance, my wife sold her letters from my sister for £6,000 to the Texas Library at Austin.”

“What do you think of your first book?”

“I can’t for the life of me remember what it was.”

“*The People’s* something. I looked it up.”

“Oh, yes, *The People’s Palace*. I was fearfully young, and it shows my strong socialist principles at the time. And when I was at Balliol my great hero was Trotsky. I was in a very re-

bellious mood and I’d just come out of the Army, and I don’t remember what I was supposed to be studying. I honestly don’t think I was doing anything at all and the authority was tiresome, to have to be indoors by eleven o’clock at night, that sort of fang, so I sent myself down after two terms. Will you have some wine?”

“Is it Italian?”

“I think it’s Italian. Verdicchio. . . . Is it all right to drink?”

“Very good.”

“There’s a wonderful drink called the Singapore Sling—have you ever had one?”

“Yes, I had one in the Strand Hotel in Rangoon.”

“Those are very acceptable, aren’t they. I’ve not been to Burma. Apparently the females are very beautiful in Burma.”

“They smoke cigars. . . . I’ve never been to Venice.”

“Haven’t you really? Venice really is the greatest experience in the world. When I was about twelve, I was in Venice and had terrible bronchial trouble. And Dr van Someren used to attend to me. I remember being fascinated by his red chalk pencils, which is the sort of fang that interests you when you are ten or twelve. Meanwhile he was having the most fearful time with Baron Corvo who was staying with him. . . . I’ve really travelled almost everywhere I’ve wanted to go. I was very lucky there. But I now feel as if I’ve hardly been even in London. Can you understand that? I used to love the Café Royal. I remember so well the lavatory attendant. He met absolutely everybody—in their off moments. He was called Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta. It’s a wonderful name, isn’t it? And he really was descended, apparently, from the Malatesta family and very very proud of that. They were the tyrants of Rimini. Have you been to Rimini? Next time you’re passing through in your car, you ought to get out and have a look at the wonderful Malatesta tombs.”

GERTRUDE comes in to take the plates from the first course and says to him, “Now, you’re to eat plenty.” He twitches and replies, “For some extraordinary reason I can’t get *The Lambeth Walk* out of my head.”

He hums a snatch.

“That’s because we were singing those old songs last weekend”, she says.

“You must remember *The Lambeth Walk*, do you?” he asks, humming another snatch for my benefit. “It was the last good Cockney song.”

“Mmm. I drove along it once. It’s all demolished.”

“Is it really?” he says, in an upcurve. “Gertrude is highly musical. She can sing practically all the popular tunes from the last quarter of a century.”

“I need Henrietta to teach me”, she says self-deprecatingly. “That’s Mr Sachie’s grand-daughter. Well, you are not going to believe this but I’m going to tell it to you. You know who Mick Jagger is, don’t you?”

“Oh yes.”

“Well, his granny was my mother’s bridesmaid.”

Sachie laughs his juddering laugh.

"I tell everybody", she continues. "His mother came from Derbyshire where Mr Sachie comes from."

"Eckington", interposes Sachie, while Mrs Stephenson puts a steak-and-kidney pie in the centre of the table, and dishes of potatoes, carrots, peas.

"Amazing", I say. "I interviewed him once in Paris. It was tea-time, and he'd just got up."

"What a life", she says, and leaves.

AND SACHIE SAYS "Max Beerbohm had a sister who was a nun and who made a great career for herself by writing a music-hall song which had a terrific success. She went on being a nun but lived off the proceeds for the rest of her life."

"Amazing", I say again. "And why do you suppose Beerbohm left England?"

"Rapallo was more economical, I expect, and he liked the climate. It's very understandable. I remember having lunch with him at Rapallo. There was a procession outside. It was Mussolini going past. And Beerbohm said 'There goes the Black Bottom'."

"Are you musical, Sachie?"

"I'm not a musician. I've certainly written a lot about music. At the moment I'm stuck on Domenico Scarlatti. I think he was the great master of music for the harpsichord as Chopin was for the piano. He has such an extraordinary variety, for one fing. And some of it is deeply, almost upsettingly passionate. He has the most extraordinary changes of mood, which are very fascinating."

"Wasn't he Sicilian?"

"His father was. Alessandro."

"What don't you like?"

"Where music's concerned, you know, I know it's fearfully impertinent to say so but, um, I'm really not awfully fond, well, of Beethoven, you know. . . ." He seems truly contrite, looking uneasily at his plate. Then he continues, "But I really like music more than anything else, so I like almost any form of it. I've got some wonderful songs of Gershwin over there. Sung by Ella Fitzgerald. And I used to like going to night-clubs. You go to nightclubs, do you?"

"I do."

"Very wise. . . . If you give me your glass, I'll give you some more wine. . . . How long is it since we last met? About a year?"

"Eighteen months?"

"You see, my memory is getting bad, isn't it?"

"Is it? Mine's pretty bad already. Did you go to that night-club in Paris, *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*?"

"Yes, I went with Cocteau. He more or less ran it. And he taught me when one's in a restaurant and the dish is shown to you before being served, one should say '*Merci, c'est bien ressemblant*'. Meaning 'Thank you, yes, it really quite looks like whatever it's supposed to be'. Quite funny." He has another little chuckle, then goes on: "I went to Paris to see poor Modigliani. You know his pictures, do you? And he, poor fink, was in the most terrible state."

"What was the matter?"

"Well, he was dying. From tuberculosis and malnutrition and everything else. And his wife—well, she wasn't his wife, she was his mistress—he died, and she was going to have his baby and she threw herself out of the window and so that was the end of that. And I bought two pictures by him for £4 each, which is really shaming and I'd almost sooner it wasn't mentioned. But I think he died about a fortnight later. One of these pictures went for £160,000 not long ago. Which is appalling, isn't it, and shaming and dreadful, don't you think it is?"

"Yes. But it happens all the time. It's very true-to-life, that story. The picture would go for a lot more now."

"One of the most beautiful paintings in the world is in the Louvre. *Gilles* by Watteau. Do you know the picture well?"

"Do I? No. I don't know Paris either."

"The next time you go there you must have a look. It really is the masterpiece of the 18th century. And if you look at Gilles carefully, Watteau has painted red in the corners of his eyes. As if he'd been weeping. Chagall said that the *pants* of Gilles always made him want to cry. And somehow they do have that effect on one. The pants really are—"

"Poignant pants."

"Yes. There is something terribly moving about Gilles's pants. . . . When were you born?"

"1948. End of September."

"That means you are 51 years younger than me. I was born in 1897. I read a long article, 'Had Queen Victoria a Sense of Humour?', the other day. There was a grand diplomatic reception and one of the foreign diplomats was so overcome that on departure he kissed his own hand instead of hers. And that made her quite hysterical with laughter, apparently."

I LAUGH AND LOOK OUT OF the window. The sun has melted the frost on the lawn in a few circular patches. These glow a rich green under the blue sky, and everywhere outside is touched with gold sunlight which pours at an oblique angle into half the dining-room.

"What is your earliest memory?"

"Oh, my goodness. Honestly, I can't remember. It was so long ago. I remember the Russo-Japanese War very well. That was 1905. The Russians lost. We were all dreadfully surprised. But my chief childhood memory is how much I hated going back to school."

"Prince Charles is a great advocate of Queen Victoria's sense of humour."

He coughs, and says: "My encounters with members of the Royal Family have been few and far between. But I did drive once down a crowded street with Queen Mary, and she did lower the window and say, 'Why don't you cheer, you little idiots?'. Which is really quite funny, isn't it? Almost my only other encounter was when I went to a wedding when I was about seven, and Queen Alexandra was there looking very beautiful but very enamelled. And she had her black silk ear-trumpet. Do you know, I upset my lemonade into her ear-trumpet. And she was delighted. She laughed and laughed and laughed. I felt I should've adored her if I'd known her better. . . . The Queen Mother is the most charming, tactful

person imaginable. She was a great friend of my brother's."

"I like the story of the Queen Mother saying at lunch to the Queen, 'Don't have a second glass of wine, dear. You've got to rule this afternoon'."

He chuckles. He chuckles frequently, an endearing, infectious, staccato way of chuckling which creases up his whole face. He doesn't usually laugh outright but will take the chuckle to its absolute limit, at which point it judders and sometimes turns into a cough. Both cough and chuckle end abruptly but their atmosphere lingers on in the voice.

"What about when you did the Companion of Honour?"

"That was almost embarrassingly easy. I found myself scatted chatting away with the Queen and eventually I thought it's not possible, it can't be her—but it was. I was told I must bow twice on admission to the presence and twice on the way out, and I absolutely forgot about it on leaving but I don't think it mattered very much. I didn't realise how *huge* Buckingham Palace is—I've not been inside it before. It goes right back. I do remember when I was in the Grenadiers, we had to go on guard there, and the band was playing and we saw an absolutely furious face at the window. It was King George V. The band had got it into their heads to play the March from *Prince Igor*, and he was on to it like that [snapping his fingers]. He sent down a message, saying 'Stop it now, and never again!' So the poor fings had to stop it in the middle and they were rather offended by that, too."

"What didn't he like about it? The fact that it was Russian?"

"That it was Russian. And he wanted the Maidens' Chorus from *The Maid of the Mountains* or somefing of that sort. . . ."

"Have you got lots of things like the Companion of Honour?"

"I've got about . . . two honorifics."

"What's the other one?"

"The Freedom of the City of Lima. . . . The grand object of all travel is to get to Angkor. Did you manage to get there?"

"No."

"Poor old Angkor, it's out of bounds now. I've been there twice. It's absolutely enormous. You can walk for miles. Heaven knows what it was really all about—but it was always uninhabited, and built apparently to placate their gods and therefore nobody ever slept there. They slept in reed huts some distance away. That makes it very haunted, in a way. I saw somebody a few days ago who'd been to the Galapagos. I can't think where they are. Are they off the coast of Peru?"

"I always forget where they are. I always look it up—then I always forget again."

"Rather a dear old publisher called Rainbird—do you know him? He landed himself on Easter Island, which apparently is absolutely terrifying. It's about 3,000 miles from anywhere, in the Pacific. Once you get there you have to stay three weeks, 'coz the aeroplane only comes once in three weeks. He was nearly driven insane by it. He really was made quite ill, poor fng. And those enormous monolithic statues. Nobody knows who made them. Or when. Or why."

"There's a brand new theory which has just come out. They don't know who made them, or when, or why. But they think they know why they stopped making them."

"That's interesting. Why did they stop making them?" he asks.

"Because apparently in order to make these things and raise them up they needed tree trunks as wheels, etcetera, and when the trees ran out they couldn't do any more."

Gertrude enters unobtrusively with a steamed chocolate pudding.

"I'll bring in some more sauce", she says, putting the pudding on the table, "in case you . . . want more sauce."

"This looks very good", he says, "but it might be frightfully hot, so be careful."

"It's supposed to be hot", she tells him; then says to me *sotto voce*, "He doesn't eat enough. But he loves this. There's always method in my madness."

"What's Gertrude saying? I missed that", says Sachie, flickering in consternation as if a plot might be afoot.

"I was saying how much you like this. And I make a special chocolate cake, too", she continues. "Osbert's recipe."

"What's special about it?" I ask.

"Nothing. Mrs Gubby gave it to Osbert. She guarded the recipe and only cooked it for Queen Mary, but since Queen Mary was a great friend of Osbert's, Mrs Gubby condescended to give it to him. And he condescended to give it to me. But the silly thing is—*exactly* the same recipe is in Lady Maclean's Cookbook!" And with a soft cackle, Mrs Stephenson withdraws.

THERE IS silence as each communes with his plate of chocolate pudding. Spoons clattering on china, and quietly champing jaws emphasise the hush and repose on the brows of ruminant beings. . . .

Eventually Sachie looks up and, with his green eyes in their expression of surprised enquiry, he asks, "Is there anywhere you particularly want to go at the moment?"

"Russia."

"I haven't been to Russia. I've been to Poland. There's a marvellous Russian who lives near here called Igor Winogradoff who married the daughter of the famous Lady Ottoline Morrell. Well, his mother's Norwegian. I asked him if he remembered Moscow before the War—the First War—and he said he remembered how wonderful the chocolate shops were. He was about eight or nine at the time."

Gertrude rematerialises with the extra chocolate sauce.

"There's plenty more", says Gertrude.

"One's only young once", he says. "Gertrude, who's that out there strolling along the garden path?"

"It's somebody Bernard's just gone out to. He's in charge of putting in the trees. Will you have a little more?"

"Thank you, dear. . . . Fine, that's enough. . . . There's a very charming nice young man let loose in London drawing-rooms now called Azimat Guirey. Have you met him?"

I confess I haven't. And when, actually, is "now"?

"He's a direct descendent of Genghis Khan. Strange to think of him being in London drawing-rooms. He's a Moslem. He's done the pilgrimage to Mecca. And I'm told he lives near Dublin, which is awfully curious."

"How can he be a direct descendent of Genghis Khan?"

"I dunno. Have a tiny drop more wine."

"No, I'm fine, thank you, Sachie."

"Oh, have a tiny drop more."

"All right, just a dash. I'll tell you what I wanted to ask you. Did you ever happen to meet Swinburne? He died in 1909."

"No, I never met him."

"You were too young."

"Yes. But Sir Edmund Gosse we knew, who was a kind of doyen of English letters, and he was a great friend of Swinburne. Which was Gosse's attraction from our point of view." He pronounces doyen (as he pronounced *Prince Igor*) in the French manner. "I must tell you a funny story about Evelyn Waugh and his first interview. Evelyn was a little boy in knickerbockers, I suppose about ten years old, and Gosse said to him, 'Where are those little knees going to carry you?', looking at the knickerbockers, you see. And Evelyn said, 'Wherever I damn well want to go'. And then Gosse said, 'Ah, the confidence of youth to be able to envisage a prearranged destination.' It's a wonderful Victorian sentence, isn't it?"

WE DECIDE TO GO and sit beside the fire. The sky has clouded a little, and the daylight is already beginning to fade. In the drawing-room Sachie bends his limbs in various places and puts himself back in the winged armchair with piles of books round its legs. I wonder if the house is haunted.

"No, not haunted at all. But since my wife died, I do get very nervous sometimes. That's a photograph of her over there." He indicates with a long finger a pretty and rather saucy-looking woman. "I absolutely refuse to spend a night in this house by myself. Gertrude and her husband live in the village, and so her husband comes to sleep here at night."

"She's been with you for a long time?"

"For well over 50 years. And she and her husband together for well over 100 years. She comes from my native village of Eckington. . . . I was thinking in the middle of the night last night about all the people I've been in love with in my life. There were five of them. And I'm not going to give any names."

"Your sister didn't marry. And your brother was homosexual and didn't marry. You were the only one to be conventional in that sense, to marry and have children."

"That's true." And he adds with crooked smile and alarmed eyebrows, "But extreme normality can be very unpleasant. Dean Cunningham, an ancestor of mine, had, I discovered recently, twenty sons. And they were all by the same wretched woman too. Can you imagine anything more hideous? I expect quite a few died off early sort of thing, so probably it wasn't as bad as it sounds."

"And you seem to have been the only one to have a fairly easy relationship with your parents."

"Well, I was devoted to my mama and also very fond of my papa. I was the youngest and I think they had sort of got the hang of it by the time I came along."

His mother, Lady Ida, sweet, snobbish, overfond of

gambling and not very clever, became seriously entangled with moneylenders. When her husband refused to pay her debts, she was prosecuted and went to prison. Sir George, an eccentric man who wrote among other things a history of the two-pronged fork, and presided over the family's shrinking iron and coal money, is usually presented as an ogre. When his wife came out of prison, for example, he announced that he would forgive her. But he seems also to have possessed considerable charm.

"Oh, I'm so glad you think so. Because it's time Papa stopped being maligned. Osbert overdid it in his autobiography. I think really that in some ways he was a much nicer character than Osbert. My father had this wonderful manservant called Henry Moat, who used to say, 'Tonight, Sir George, you are dining alone. And you couldn't wish for better company'."

"There don't seem to have been many aunts, uncles and cousins in your childhood."

"Well, my father couldn't stand the sight of my mother's relations. . . . I inherited this house from an aunt. All the characters in here"—he extends an arm like a piece of driftwood—"all these boring portraits, are relations. That's a portrait of quite a successful general, Lord Hutchinson of Alexandria and Knocklofty."

Gertrude appears and says, "Am I interrupting?" She hands Sachie the chocolates, and he makes an enormous noise unwrapping the golden box from its paper coverings."

"They're the best chocolates I've ever had", he says.

"Have one, Gertrude. You know you adore the white ones."

"No, I won't have one now."

"Are you feeling all right, Gertrude? You don't look awfully well."

"Of course I'm feeling all right." And she leaves us to munch.

I say, "If you have blood pressure or heart problems, you're not supposed to eat chocolate. It speeds you up. Have you ever had heart problems?"

"Mmm. Yes."

"You have? And did they tell you not to eat chocolate and salt?"

"I can't remember. I went into the army when I was eighteen, but never went to war because I had a bad heart. I've always had a bad heart. I never had to do any sports at school, which was fortunate—except I like the sound of cricket. A sunny English sound. You don't get it anywhere else."

"You get it in India. But it's mixed with the sound of mosquitoes. Have you been to Ooty?"

"Ooji?"

"Ootacamund."

"No, I haven't."

"There's a shop there called Spencer's which sells Dundee cake. And another one where you can buy Cheddar cheese. The last remnants of the Raj may be found there."

"Yes, it's pathetic, isn't it?"

"It was interesting. There was pathos in it."

"How appalling it is to arrive in Bombay late at night and see all these thousands of people sleeping on the pavement. But I believe Calcutta is much worse."

Sachie adds lugubriously, "I know someone who's going to Japan. I wish I was going to Japan."

"I looked you up in *Who's Who*. It said you were Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire."

"Now wait a moment—I was Sheriff, wasn't I?"

"Oh, is that what it was? Probably I've got it wrong."

"Was I a lord lieutenant as well? We must ask Gertrude. She would know. I was certainly a sheriff." (It turns out I was mistaken—he was Sheriff, not Lord Lieutenant.) "That involves sitting in court and listening to cases and walking in fearfully boring processions and it's also very expensive because you have to entertain the judges, and all that sort of thing."

"So why did you agree to do it?"

"I can't imagine. It must've gone to my head or something."

"Is this a particularly social county?"

"In the north of Northamptonshire more. They go in for hunting up there."

"You've never gone in for it?"

"No. And I do suffer a great deal from loneliness because my poor darling wife is no longer here. I was so marvellously happily married for 56 years, which is quite a time. During the night she made this rather curious noise. And her eyes opened and rolled back. They said she'd had a massive cerebral haemorrhage, which was a very good thing because if it hadn't been massive Georgia might have been reduced to a vegetable. There's no sort of warning for these things. Being old is quite a problem, you know."

"Why is it quite a problem?"

"Because it's so awfully tiresome. And if you've had a very happy life, it's so awful that it only happens once."

THE CLOCK STRIKES the half hour with a high pure ping.

"Can I help myself to some more coffee? . . ."

"My eyes have got very much better now that I'm older. I saw a famous eye specialist called Dr Ida Mann and she said—this is years ago—your eyes will improve enormously as you get older. And that has happened. . . . I've never had any religious feeling of any sort, have you?"

"I've had some ecstatic moments."

"I can't believe in the Virgin Birth or anything of that sort, can you? The local vicar came to see me, and I had to explain that I thought Our Lord was an ordinary human being but a very wonderful one, and leave it at that."

"Do you think you've changed as you've grown older?"

"I think I've become stupider. I think it's inevitable as you get older." His face creases with mirth, and a chuckle turns into a cough.

"Does contemplating the modern world depress you? Old people often say it does."

"Well, in some ways it's encouraging, isn't it. There's a young man near here, about ten miles away, called Hawkins, and he became completely paralysed and deaf and dumb. They then opened his head and took out the biggest cerebral tumour there's ever been and he's perfectly all right now. Got his speech back and everything. That was about a month ago. It's almost unbelievable. And it's wonderful to be alive, you see, apart from anything else."

"Would you say you've learned anything particularly?"

"I've certainly learned a lot, yes. Having travelled so much,

I have a most marvellous knowledge of works of art—really more, I think, than almost anybody else I know, without wishing to throw my weight about. And I have a most extraordinary accumulation of knowledge on rather unusual subjects like . . . snuffboxes."

"I really meant more in the personal sense."

"One realises as one grows older that one's been dead wrong about people. Often mistaken them entirely. That's the growth of benevolence, I suppose."

"Were you involved with your sister's row with Noël Coward?" (Edith's touchiness and snobbery were aroused by a harmless skit on the Sitwells in one of his reviews.)

"Slightly. But I quite liked him. For some strange reason I know that pink settee over there belonged to him. We bought it somewhere—but it had belonged to him. I'm going to retire for a second and be back in two minutes."

"All right. I must be going soon, anyway."

"No, no, there's no hurry at all. I've got to go and wee as they say."

OSBERT SITWELL could be even nastier than Edith. When Sir George Sitwell died, Osbert inherited the baronetcy, the estate at Renishaw, the castle of Montegufoni in Tuscany, and everything else. And when Sir Osbert died, Sacheverell became the baronet but Osbert divided the property between Sachie, Sachie's eldest son, and Osbert's Italian boyfriend in such a way as to prevent any one of them being able to live in the grand style Osbert himself had enjoyed. Sacheverell had been very much looking forward to spending his last years with his wife at Montegufoni. So when Osbert left the castle to Sachie's son with insufficient money to maintain it, it is possible to interpret this as a gesture of spite. Weston Hall has about it a breath of Arcadian exile.

When he returns I ask, "Why do you think your brother broke up the inheritance?"

"Osbert probably rather resented my getting married because he and I had been living very happily together in Chelsea. But the castle was originally a megalomaniac idea of my father's, and it has always had this megalomaniac effect on people. It's now a loony-bin. No, perhaps we shouldn't say that. It is now a rest home. And when he bought it, over a hundred people were living there, sort of camping in it. It was a complete village, really. Perfectly ridiculous. We used to go there every Easter. There is a room there painted by Severini which is rather nice." Sachie waves his long hands about near his ankles and eventually finds what he is looking for, his packet of cigarettes. "Having been brought up a good deal in Italy, I very much prefer Spain. I like the Spaniards much more than the Italians."

"Why's that?"

"I dunno. The Italians are too agreeable in a way."

"And what are the Spanish? Disagreeable?"

"They're more difficult until you get to know them. You won't have a cigarette? The Sicilians are quite like the Spaniards in this respect. Have you been to Noto?"

"No."

"It really is the most wonderful, forgotten place. You must go there."

"Where is it?"

"Sicily."

"I very much want to go to Sicily."

"You must stop at Noto. It is all gold. And very sleepy, remote and wonderful with old places and baroque churches. And surrounded by lemon groves and almond groves. . . ."

W E DON'T TALK for a little while. He puffs on his cigarette. Eventually he says, "I was a great admirer of D'Annunzio. I still can't help being one either."

"A very unfashionable figure."

"Very unfashionable, yes. All the more reason for liking him. I thought he was such a wonderful writer. We are now talking about when I was about twenty. I went to see him at Fiume. He had seized the city, and held it. I went there with my bruvver and we had dinner several times wiv D'Annunzio. Then we had dinner on another night with a Garibaldi veteran in a red shirt. . . . It's getting quite dark now. . . . I must close the shutters in a little while."

"The frost has stayed on the trees all day."

"I'm now hibernating and I go to bed fearfully early. I mean, about a quarter to nine. But then I read an enormous time in bed, you see. I never put my light out until half-past ten or eleven. But in this awful climate one really is more comfortable *in* bed in the country. I've formed an enormous personal attachment to my electric blanket. Have you got one?"

I laugh and shake my head.

"No, well, you'll find as you get older that you really do have to keep warm."

"What is your most treasured possession?"

"Er, well. . . . I was going to say *myself*. It's true."

"Apart from yourself."

"Then I should have to say dear Mrs Stephenson. I'd be absolutely lost without her."

"Do you have any vices?"

"Well, obviously selfishness. Jealousy is a big one . . . jealousy of people who've had an undue amount of success."

"You've not had success?"

"Not nearly the success I've deserved."

"What is the success you deserve?"

". . . Well, I think I ought to be known as a really first-rate poet, which I am, although I say it myself. And a damn good prose-writer too. . . . I don't think I have any sexual vices. I'm not aware of them, anyway. . . . I'm certainly fearfully greedy."

"For what?"

"Think how much I like those chocolates is the answer to that."

"That's not greed. That's pleasure."

"Pleasure and good taste, isn't it? I'm very partial to *foie gras*, are you? And caviar. But many's the long day since—have you had caviar lately? If one's being taken out, it's fearfully bad manners to ask for caviar now, isn't it? And

champagne I'm very fond of, are you? It's one of the great inventions of human beings. . . . I think I'd better close the shutters. Then Gertrude will come and pull the curtains in a minute."

He rises like a crane from a lawn, and with surprising vigour and an almighty din he slams and bars the shutters against the gathering night. Gertrude comes in, and he asks her if she'd mind pulling the curtains, and she says she'll do it in a minute.

"Now, would you like a whisky and soda?" he asks.

"Actually I would. Then I really must be going. Lots of soda, please."

Gertrude fetches the drinks, piles more logs on to the fire, and says to me, "Lady Egremont was here last week", as if I know the woman in question.

"She's still going strong", says Sachie. "She lives in a place called Cockermouth—where Wordsworth came from and all the daffodils. One's friends are all dropping off very fast now. Not that I insist women be my age. In fact I quite like them to be 35."

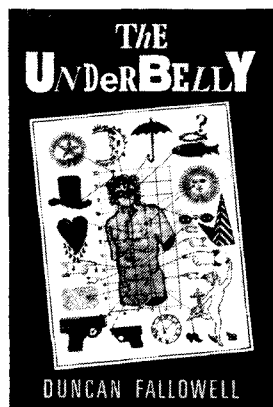
"Why don't you introduce Mr Fallowell to Buster?"

"What, dear?"

"To Buster . . . Buster's one year older than Mr Sachie. He's his oldest friend."

"He sent me a wonderful magnum of champagne. He owns the Harrods of Cincinnati. Now, have we got his address? . . . He's been a friend of mine since I was two or somefing. We met in San Remo. We were both staying at the Royal Hotel. He's American."

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MACMILLAN

Gertrude is going through an address-book with great concentration.

"You've been to America?" I ask.

"Yes, quite a few times. And to Canada. My wife was Canadian."

"But you've never written about it."

"America is kind of banal, isn't it?" he says, and a cough rags his chest.

"Well, that's its speciality."

"Won't you have a cigarette? I liked Chicago. The people are awfully nice there. And I have several very nice female American friends. But do remember that the Texas Library pays enormous amounts of money for things. They buy up manuscripts like lunatics. Seriously, don't forget that."

GERTRUDE gets annoyed that she can't find the address. "I did ask you to write it down to save me the trouble", she says. He becomes flustered, picks up a book at random, dives into it, rapidly flicking the pages, pretending to be awfully absorbed by what it contains until the moment of her irritation has passed.

"You've got down here a recipe for lumbago", she says. "*On a lump of sugar put 1 drop of oil of cloves, 1 drop of juniper, 1 drop. . .*" Her voice trails away, but the address hunt continues. Notebooks and address-books in other parts of the house are drawn into the search, and in the process I finish my drink.

"Look, I must go now. I've stayed far too long."

"Must you really?" he asks in an upward drawl, vaguely discouraging the idea. He likes company and doesn't see enough people these days.

"Will you sign this book for me?"

"I certainly will", he says. "Is it a book of mine, incidentally?"

"Yes. *All Summer in a Day. . .*"

He signs it in a looping hand. I look at it, laugh, and close the book, wish him well, then shake hands and say goodbye. Gertrude sees me across the hall to the front door.

Suddenly there is cold on my face and stars in a black sky and silence in every direction. The car door makes a loud clunk in the clean cold air. And as the car crunches on gravel and pulls away into the frosty night, the last golden squares of illumination are disappearing from the hall as Gertrude completes the closing of the shutters.

Topsy

He shivers, beckons from deep shadow,
brow mirroring the tailored grass
still glassed with dew in afternoon.

His jacket droops now, looser, baggy,
his pockets sag with matches, string,
skeletons of things, a ring of washers.

She hesitates in sunshine, staring:
her buckle flares, gold igniting blue
as she stubs her shoe into the turf.

This man can't be her grandfather,
who gathered flowers, climbed trees,
his knees a mountainside, a saddle.

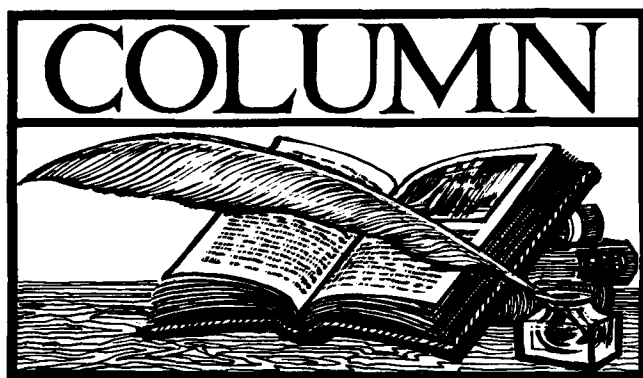
Something—his awkwardness, perhaps—
unwraps her. She smiles, waves, skips,
dips into a sprint, dew flying.

Gaps between her footprints widen,
while deep inside his ragged memory
he, in buttoned shoes, is running, too.

She leaps into his halting space:
a blur of lace, red ribbons, thighs,
and rising slow, her overturning skirt.

He topsies her, this final time, sways,
delays the darkness rushing, winces,
grins as she spins round to her mother.

John Latham



“DON’T GO HOME.” That dread message, received late at night, makes a fine suspenseful ending to Chapter XLIV of *Great Expectations*. It affects us in several ways. Its recipient, Pip, is like the reader—already jumpy. He has just discovered that the benefactor who rescued him from poverty was not the stately Miss Havisham, whose ward Estella he loves, but the frightening escaped convict Abel Magwitch, whom he had once helped as a child. Magwitch has returned in secret to England, having made a fortune in New South Wales. Pip is reluctantly hiding him: but an informer is after them, and the warning comes only just in time.

Take care of suspense, and the sounds will take care of themselves. *Pace* Lewis Carroll, the sounds in this case are crucial: three long O vowels, one after another, like ominous knocks on the door. “DON’T GO HOME.” They almost recall *les trois coups* as the curtain goes up on a French stage.

Then there’s the word “home” itself. Somebody, somewhere, has no doubt compiled a Ph.D. thesis on “Domesticity in Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*”, to be published by the University of Laputa Press under some such title as *Magwitch à la Maison*. The chapter-headings probably include “Pip’s Place: a Metaphor”, “The Gargery Ménage: a Menagerie”, “Estella’s Estate”, “Who Does Miss Havisham’s Hair?” and “Out of Pocket in Barnard’s Inn”. “In this post-deconstructionist perspective”, writes the author’s word-processor, “the diachronic ‘plot’ can be explicated as a thematic succession of significant spaces—cottage, mansion, London lodgings—each of which problematises the narrator’s individualistic social ethic.”

Enough of that. But the jargon conceals a point. Pip, his parents and five brothers dead and buried, is in need of a home. So is the jilted Miss Havisham; so is the hunted Magwitch; so is the mistaught Estella; so, before he marries Biddy, is the henpecked Joe Gargery. Dickens’s vision of felicity—which helps explain his deep and abiding appeal—is essentially domestic: a nest, a haven, a refuge, a berth. Magwitch’s threat when he meets the boy Pip on the marshes—that a young fellow convict will tear his heart and liver out—precisely involves violation of the snug private citadel. “A boy may lock his door, may be warm in bed, may tuck himself up, may draw the clothes over his head, may think himself comfortable and safe, but that young man will softly creep and creep his way to him and tear him open.” Terror will

strike at the very heart of home. And the late-night warning message, 365 pages later, tells Pip that home is indeed no longer safe.

It may be that Dickens’s own childhood, insecure, humiliating, and peripatetic, made him especially defensive about home—rather as modern householders, begirt with burglar-alarms and window-locks, are sadly aware that an Englishman’s home has had to become his castle. But many others in Dickens’s century sang home’s praises. John Howard Payne (1791-1852) is credited with the phrase “Home, home, sweet, sweet home!” and with the slogan “There’s no place like home!” from the same song. Stephen Foster (1826-1864) hymned both “de old folks at home” and “the old Kentucky Home far away”. A mysterious “Dr Brewster Higley”, in 1873, asked to be given “a home where the buffalo roam” and—with sober realism—“where *seldom* is heard a discouraging word”; only his specification for the skies (“not cloudy all day”) seemed extravagant. Another virtual unknown, D. Eardley Wilmot, was memorably content with “only a tumble-down nest” as his “little grey home in the west”. It took Tennyson, in *The Palace of Art*, to embalm his compatriots’ favourite idyll:

*An English home—gray twilight poured
On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,
A haunt of ancient Peace.*

How different from the home life of our own dear inner cities. And from mine, if it comes to that. Leaving aside various barracks and an Army tent in Egypt, I seem to have had some fifteen homes in half-a-dozen countries. Few of them lived up to Tennyson’s vision of soporific tidiness and subfusc pastoral damp.

Yet, every time the furniture crosses a frontier or a threshold, the nesting instinct reasserts itself. One begins to fuss about like a travelling theatre director, dressing the set. Before long, fresh walls and plaster new have disappeared—behind bookshelves, sofas, armchairs, chests, pictures, sconces, looking-glasses, standard lamps, coffers, desks, side-tables, curtains, and all the rest of the portable props. Home was not on the premises: it was in the removal van. In the last resort, it’s probably in one’s head.

WHAT REMINDED ME of this was a fascinating new book by Witold Rybczynski, *Home: A Short History of an Idea*.¹ Despite his name, Rybczynski was born in Edinburgh. He grew up in Surrey, and attended schools in England and Canada, where he’s now Professor of Architecture at McGill. Perhaps, as an itinerant like Dickens, he too feels the need for roots: although his university is in Montreal, he and his wife have built their own home in rural Quebec.

His point of departure is one of the words used by Magwitch—“comfortable”. “During the six years of my architectural education”, his Foreword begins,

“the subject of comfort was mentioned only once. It was by a mechanical engineer whose job it was to initiate my classmates and me into the mysteries of air-conditioning and heating. He described something called the ‘comfort

¹ *Home: A Short History of an Idea*. By WITOLD RYBCZYNSKI. Heinemann, £12.95.

zone', which, as far as I can remember, was a kidney-shaped, crosshatched area on a graph that showed the relationship between temperature and humidity. Comfort was inside the kidney, discomfort was everywhere else. This, apparently, was all that we needed to know about the subject. It was a curious omission from an otherwise rigorous curriculum; one would have thought that comfort was a crucial issue in preparing for the architectural profession, like justice in law, or health in medicine."

In saying this, Rybczynski acknowledges that "the word 'comfortable' did not originally refer to enjoyment or contentment". For centuries, its essential ingredient was *consolation*, as in the Latin verb "*consolare*" or "the Comforter"—the Holy Ghost. By the 16th century, a "comforter" could also be an accomplice in crime.

"The idea of support was eventually broadened to include people and things that afforded a measure of satisfaction, and 'comfortable' came to mean tolerable or sufficient—one spoke of a bed of comfortable width, although not yet of a comfortable bed."

Not until the 18th century did the word begin to connote mainly physical well-being—often in the teeth of the elements. Sir Walter Scott was one of the first novelists to use it in this sense. "Let it freeze without", he wrote, "we are comfortable within". "Comfort" and "comfortable" also came readily to Jane Austen's pen. In her novels, as Rybczynski points out,

"there were not only comfortable rooms and comfortable carriages, but comfortable meals, comfortable views, and comfortable situations. It was as if she couldn't get enough of it—this new, undramatic word which was so well-suited to the bourgeois coziness of the world she described."

In *Emma*, she even stressed its Englishness. "It was a sweet view—sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a bright sun, without being oppressive."

BARRING THE SUNSHINE, this sounds rather akin to Tennyson's "English home"; and Rybczynski convincingly traces the parallel development of the two notions twinned in the phrase "home comfort". Medieval dwellings were austere: "people didn't so much live in their houses as camp in them." 17th-century Holland, by contrast, produced the neat urban domesticity admired by so many visitors and immortalised by such painters as De Witte, De Hooch, and Vermeer. It was a bourgeois achievement, much influenced by Dutch married women, who according to Sir William Temple, the British ambassador, had "the whole care and absolute management of their Domestique". In France, too, a middle-class woman, Madame de Pompadour, helped to introduce greater privacy, intimacy and comfort into domestic interiors: but even the Hermitage at Versailles, the smallest of her houses, retained a palatial air. As Rybczynski remarks:

"If it is true that Rococo furniture introduced informality

to the palace, it nevertheless never shed its courtly origins; even today, a room full of Louis XV furniture cannot, for better or worse, avoid looking regal."

England developed differently. There, the distinction between the nobility and the wealthy upper-middle class was less sharp, and the influence of the Court less absolute: the countryside was not necessarily provincial. "Scarcely any persons who hold a leading place in the circles of their society", wrote an American ambassador, "live in London. They have houses in London, in which they stay while Parliament sits, and occasionally visit at other seasons; but their homes are in the country." "After the seventeenth century", adds Rybczynski,

"the English less and less referred to their homes, however grand, as anything but 'houses'—there was no special word such as 'château', 'palazzo', or even 'villa' to distinguish the large from the small, the grand from the merely mundane."

The Georgian house, in fact, very successfully combined elegance with domesticity and comfort. 18th-century prosperity encouraged leisure; but save for riding, skating, and cricket, outdoor sports were rare. Even croquet did not arrive from France until the 1850s—roughly when golf and bowls arrived from Scotland.

"Consequently, the sedentary eighteenth-century English bourgeois spent most of their time at home. . . . It was the age of conversation—and of gossip. The novel became popular. So did indoor games; men played billiards, women embroidered, and together they played cards. . . . They went on placid walks and admired one of their great accomplishments, the English garden. . . . The result was that the home acquired a position of social importance that it had never had before, or since. No longer a place of work as it had been in the Middle Ages, the home became a place of leisure."

The 19th century brought greater convenience in the form of gaslight and ventilation—often despised and ignored by the aristocracy as being *nouveau riche*. But although the Victorians were great engineers and innovators, they never developed what Rybczynski calls "an engineering aesthetic".

"The interiors of steamships, trains, and tramways—extraordinary inventions—always took comfortably familiar forms. The stateroom of a liner resembled a suite at the Ritz. Train compartments were designed to look like small parlors; wealthy businessmen had their own railway carriages, whose interiors were finished like plush smoking rooms, with panelled walls, easy chairs, and tasselled drapery. Tramway cars assumed the visual language and ornamentation of the horse-drawn carriage. . . .

"It is easy to scoff at the way the Victorians made new devices conform to old, non-mechanical tastes—that criticism is the staple of many books on industrial design. But it was precisely the absence of any perceived contradiction between tradition and innovation that accounted for the rapidity of change during this period. The ornate kerosene lamps, chandelier-style gasoliers, and richly decorated

ceiling fans that collectors prize so highly today are a reminder of how effortlessly—and frequently how gracefully—the new was combined with the old. Whatever new invention came along, however innovative it might be, the Victorians felt comfortably at home with it.”

Rybczynski contrasts this attitude with that of early 20th-century Modernists. Whereas the Victorians had embraced real change but sought continuity of style, some later theorists—including, on bad days, Le Corbusier—sought to impose stylistic changes which the new technology didn’t need. Le Corbusier’s *Esprit Nouveau* pavilion at the 1925 Paris *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* was actually contra-functional: the kitchen was inconveniently small. Marcel Breuer’s Wassily Chair (1925-26), an affair of tubes and stretched unpadded leather, is a classic in design histories, but fiendish to use because it allows only one sitting position:

“If one tries to move forward to reach a coffee cup, for example, one finds oneself balanced unpleasantly on the unyielding edge of the seat. If one turns sideways, the armrests offer little support. The flat back and seat discourage movement; one soon begins to feel restless. If the knees are bent, the thighs are no longer supported by the taut seat, which also prevents one from stretching the legs out full-length. Before long, the edge of the hard leather begins to cut painfully into the underside of the

thighs, and the double-stitched edges of the armrests run unpleasantly along the elbow. This is an easy chair in which one cannot relax for more than thirty minutes at a time.”

NO WONDER THAT those who can afford it seek period houses and traditional furniture. No wonder that the staff of open-plan offices erect elaborate screens of shelving, cupboards, and rubber plants to protect their individual working-space. This is not foolish nostalgia for a vanished way of life. The same people who shun bare unpainted plaster, brick, concrete, steel, plastic, and all the other trappings of Brutalism will very happily accommodate central heating, Jacuzzis, portable telephones, home computers, and large-screen videos—to name only a few. And Rybczynski himself is not recommending a systematic return to pre-Modernist décor. What he does want is to reverse the designers’ attack on domesticity. “Domestic well-being”, he concludes, “is too important to be left to experts; it is, as it has always been, the business of the family and the individual. We must rediscover for ourselves the mystery of comfort, for without it, our dwellings will indeed be machines instead of homes.” If we don’t, that once young man who still haunts architectural textbooks will softly creep and creep and have our heart and liver out.

M

Wordways

Why won't nice new poems stay put
On the page where I've arranged them?
Soon as they're sitting neat and orderly
My words begin to eye each other,
Shuffling, restless like a theatre audience
Before the show begins.

Once, abroad, I visited a cinema
Where a big black usher with a gleaming chest
Told everyone before the film,
“Stay in your seats or I give them away.”
He separated families, made small children cry;
I wish I had his firmness.

Words nag at me with their hard-luck stories;
I try to be understanding, letting them leave
Or shift to places they prefer
But can never please them all.
Most times, despairing of a truce
I relegate my efforts to a drawer

To cool off; their mood is changed
When I review them later.
Half-stifled into a new slavishness
They seem obedient, yet I'm not fooled;
My pen has become the tool of subterfuge;

What's written is a message of their own.

Irene Rawnsley

Four Poems by John Gohorry

Hobbes's Whale

A Nativity in Westport

A bad night, surely, with her husband in quarrel
run off to London, and never like to return;
and now Cousin Francis comes all flushes and short breath
with fresh news out of Weymouth not two days old

of six great Spanish terror ships full of cannon
and black letter Madrid Bibles billying up the Channel,
the torturers' vanguard full-rigged, making good headway.
She tumbles on to the rushes, her own blood burdened,

and even that great linen swathe under her heart
taut with its own small apprehensions belike
bunched in *hysterica passio*. Seven fattening months
she has borne him, like some vigilant Nordcaper,

but these travails will beach him tonight ready or no.
The midwife is summoned with towels and the secret lore
of innermost chambers, for already the hours squeeze,
tighten, and press her; how else shall she be delivered?

The night promises, threatens, but evades questioning
in rehearsed Spanish manoeuvres that terrify, suffocate
with tightly clenched hands and Jesuitical enigmas;
upstairs. Cousin Francis drowns beside a low candle,

as Beldame spits on her hands and Mistress Anne labours,
their voices in prayer making hastily-drawn prologues
to this crying text which even as daylight breaks
nudges himself towards print. Now comes deliverance

with a shriek, her fresh boy cast out on to the sheet
all seaspray, all salt. She holds him, whispering comfort.
Cousin Francis brings *rosa solis* and oatcake; Weymouth news
is of ghostships, lucid skies, daylight, terror appeased.

Watersong

Now he has language, she names the toy ships for him,
wooden splints launched into the currents of Back Brook
—the *Tamberlane*, *Easterband*, and the *Tiny So Tiny*
proud in their galleon finery, leaf sails all billowing

as they glide from their sheltered Cadiz into the main channel
of her coaxing *Come all ye's*, to be eddied in whirlpools,
sounded down to drowned river-gravels, or thrown headlong
on to those boulder reefs, that providential, speaking white foam.

Downstream on the Hoe, her muddy boys juggle their jacks
up from the bowling-green floor on to the back of the hand
and into vanishing palms, one eye on the bobbing fleet
that advances, already disconsolate, in louring weather

to their promontory. They crawl to the ness edge, hurling
clods, pebbles and flints at the bucking flotilla,
its capitanas spreadeagled athwart the supposed dyke floods,
their imagined black sails reefed into their own mourning.

The burst water swallows the ships in its sibilant echoes,
their waterlogged vowels submerged, the boys' treble *Hurrahs*
piping in and out of the brook noise, the just sea-clamour.
He will never forget her laughter, her hands suddenly cold.

Restoratives

After the second Earl's death, he locked himself up
in the great oaken cupboards where apples were stored

for the cidermaking and would speak to nobody until
his mulberry grief wore itself down to the flagstones

at five in the morning. Then Master Lawes came to visit,
bringing with him his best voice and an old bass viol

and the loose sheets of a new song he had quilled out
on the back of some turkeyskin—*o cete gigante*

to the scholars—*o domine maris insula undulans*—
but to his friend a daft ballad of a fine blue whale

washed ashore at Ancona, the beachscourers combing
her flank for fresh ambergris—a cold-hearted girl

it was said, who would not exchange flesh with the man

that desired her, metamorphosed into a cold fish

by retributive Justice. Measure and burden rehearse,
distance, and pace one another among the old cider-vats,

their grained oak sodden with birtle, the very floor
juicy with recollection, and some of the old joys

testing their foothold again under the pitched eaves
as their harmonies move to conclusion. Afterwards,

he lay alone again in his chamber, gaping on maps
still avoiding, as much as he could, to conclude hastily

—that fable of Jonah, the Matter of *cetus*, how a man
might spend three days, or three years, being trawled

through his mouthbrushes; his Artificer; how he is made;
his love and government; what sea is without whales.

Full Circle

It comes to him at night from one of the reed-edged ponds
on the far side of the park, its bottle-glass eye pressed
to the mullions, its resonant lung charged with ichor;

elsewhere in the room-shadows are his manuscript-sheets,
—fresh controversies limned in accordance with old habits
for exemplification, and suchlike; some geometrical Trials;

drafts of a late Amorous Verse. Of all discourse governed
by thirst for knowledge, there is at last an end—either
attainment or giving over bringing utterance to conclusion;

the nurse troubles his waking with nostrums and rose of solace,
lenitives for the strangury. Certainly *no discourse whatsoever*
can end in absolute knowledge of fact, past or to come,

for knowledge of fact is first, sense, and then memory,
each with its infidelities. His lord's choir sang the Advent
Hymn *Vox clara ecce intonat* as his litter was carried out

over UMBERLEY Sick but at last there are no clear voices;
the house trembles, is swallowed up in a submarine darkness.
On the far ponds a silence settles, after great waves.

FROM THE OTHER SHORE

Why Khrushchev Failed

A Man Between—By FYODOR BURLATSKY



KHRUSHCHEV and his times—an indisputably important period, and perhaps one of the most complex in our history. Important, because it has close echoes in the restructuring now taking place in the country and in the present process of democratisation. Complex, because we are dealing with a decade which was at first called “glorious”, but later censured as a period of “voluntarism” and “subjectivism”. It was the time of the 20th and 22nd Party Congress, which were reflections of the bitter political struggles that determined the country’s new course. Under Nikita Khrushchev the first steps were taken towards the revival of Leninist principles and the purification of the ideals of Socialism. Then, too, the transition began from the “Cold War” to peaceful coexistence, and a window was once again opened onto the modern world. At that abrupt turning-point in history, society took a deep breath of the air of re-newal, and choked—either from too much oxygen or from not enough.

For a long time, a very long time, it was customary not to speak of those stormy years—as if someone’s hand had torn a whole chapter clean out of our annals. For nearly 20 years there was a taboo on the name Khrushchev. But life will come into its own. In the report on the 70th anniversary of October delivered by Mikhail Gorbachov, we heard the long-awaited words about those times—what was done then, what was

not done or done wrongly, what survived into the 1980s, and what was swept away and lost in the period of stagnation.

So what are the complex and contradictory features of the individual with whom we associate a turning-point in our recent history? I do not seek to answer all the questions that have accumulated. I wish merely to share my personal reminiscences and a few opinions prompted by comparing the present day with the past.

Who makes whom—does history make the individual, or does the individual make history? I have thought and written a great deal about such dissimilar and opposite political figures of the 20th century as Lenin and Stalin, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. . . . But to this day I cannot give an entirely clear answer to this question of mine.

Remember what Bulgakov says: “How can we speak of human free-will when we cannot have a plan covering at least a thousand years or so?” And again: “A brick does not fall onto a man’s head by accident—everything is predetermined. . . .” We too, in our youth, were instilled with faith in predetermination, though admittedly it was given a scientific name—natural law. Perhaps it came from Hegel: “That which is real is reasonable.” Which means: what was, was bound to be. And it was only with age and experience that we began to understand the many possible options in history. History includes various possibilities; various chessmen take part in the game. The pawn reaches the last row and becomes a queen. Or the queen is trapped and falls victim to the pawn. I will not launch into a discussion of the problem of “The People and the Individual”. Ultimately it is the social and moral impulses emanating from the people that de-

It is inconsistent, we know, and the Party-liners in Moscow (if such there still be) can make the most of it. For over 30 years in the bedazzling prospects of East-West exchanges we insisted on the principle of “bilateral reciprocity”. Whether with Bert Brecht in East Berlin or with Alexander Tvardovsky of Moscow’s “Novy Mir”, we agreed that we would open our pages to whatever they would be pleased to write if we could have a similarly uncensored say in whatever journals they could prise open. Innumerable efforts failed.

But in recent times the East European, especially the Russian, public prints are so replete with outstanding reportage and essays that we are tempted to “go it alone”. Unilateralism is not always weak-minded.

In our continuing series of translations from recent Russian writing, we offer now a remarkable essay from the “Literaturnaya Gazeta’s” FYODOR BURLATSKY. He was

himself a close associate of Khrushchev, and is now an adviser in the intimate political circle of Mikhail Gorbachov. As the reader will note between the lines, he has interesting problems reconciling his two “reformist” careers. Burlatsky is an historian and sociologist, much travelled in the West (mostly in the entourage of the Party’s highest representatives), and in his essay makes a giant step towards revising the orthodoxies of official Bolshevik pseudo-history.

IN A FUTURE ISSUE we will be publishing an extraordinary Russian re-evaluation of Andrei Vishinsky, the notorious prosecutor in Stalin’s show trials of 1936-38, and a much-admired “Jeremy Bentham” jurist by Harold J. Laski.

M.J.L.

termine the face of the era. But in a specific period a major historical personality can also make a tremendous impact. Be that as it may, one thing is obvious: a politician, especially a country's leader, not only acts as an instrument of history, but influences events and destinies in the most direct way.

How did it come about that, after Stalin, it was Khrushchev who came to lead the country? Stalin appeared to have done everything possible to "purge" the Party of all his opponents—real and imagined, "Right" and "Left". In the 1950s a supposed aphorism of his was passed from mouth to mouth: "If you have a man, you have a problem; no man—no problem." As a result, seemingly the most loyal, the most reliable survived. How did Stalin fail to see in Khrushchev the man who would dig a grave for his cult?

In his last years, not long before his death, Stalin consigned Molotov and Mikoyan to disfavour, probably preparing for them the same fate that befell the other leaders who were destroyed with their help and support. The creation (at the 19th Congress) of the Praesidium of the CPSU Central Committee, replacing the Politburo, which had a narrower composition, was a step towards "picking off" the next generation of comrades in arms who outstayed their time. But Stalin—paradoxically!—did not "have it in" for Khrushchev.

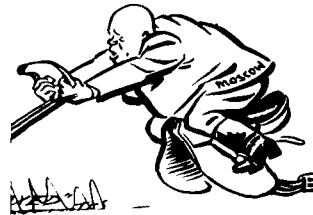
An old man's blindness? Probably not. Niccolò Machiavelli, that brilliant unmasker of tyranny, once said: "Brutus would have become Caesar, had he pretended to be a fool. . . ." I think Khrushchev somehow managed to pretend to be a very pliable person, without any special ambitions. It was said that during the all-night parties at the dacha in Kuntsevo where Stalin lived for the last 30 years, Khrushchev used to dance the *gopak*. At that time he went about in a Ukrainian smock, playing the "genuine Cossack", remote from any claims to power, a reliable performer of another's will. But, evidently, even then Khrushchev was harbouring protests deep within himself. And this surfaced immediately after Stalin's death.

IT WAS NOT BY CHANCE that Khrushchev came to power, yet at the same time it was by chance. It was not by chance, because he expressed the current in the Party which, in different conditions and probably in different ways, was represented by such dissimilar figures as Dzerzhinskiy, Bukharin, Rykov, Rudzutak and Kirov. They were the advocates of the development of the NEP and democratisation, the opponents of coercive measures in industry and agriculture, and even more so in culture. Despite the cruel Stalinist repressions, this current never died out. In this sense Khrushchev's arrival on the scene was only natural.

But, of course, there was also a large element of chance here. If Malenkov had come to an agreement with Beria, if the "Stalinist guard" had rallied in 1953, rather than in June 1957, Khrushchev would not have been leader. Our entire history could have followed a rather different course. It is hard for us to admit it, but in fact everything hung by a thread.

And all the same, history made the right choice. It was a response to the real problems of our life. The countryside, which was increasingly reduced to poverty and was basically

half-ruined; the technically backward industry; the acute shortage of housing; the population's low standard of living; millions of people interned in prisons and camps; the country's isolation from the outside world—all this required a new policy and radical changes. And Khrushchev arrived as—precisely!—the people's hope, the precursor of a new age.



AT THAT TIME everything associated with the 20th CPSU Congress deeply moved us. How did Khrushchev dare to deliver the report on Stalin, knowing that the vast majority of delegates would be against the revelations? Where did he find the courage and the confidence in eventual success? This was one of the very rare cases in history when a political leader put his personal power, and even his life, on the line for the sake of higher social objectives. There was not a single figure in the post-Stalin leadership who would have dared to deliver such a report on the personality cult. Khrushchev, and only Khrushchev, in my view, could do it—so boldly, so emotionally, and in many respects with so little thought. It took someone with Khrushchev's nature—desperation to the point of adventurism. It took someone who had passed through the trials of suffering, fear, and time-serving to take such a step. His own assessment of the moment, heard during a meeting with foreign guests, is certainly interesting:

"I am often asked how I dared to deliver that report at the 20th Congress. We trusted that man for so many years! We raised him up. We created the Cult. And then to take that risk. . . . But since I was elected First Secretary, I had to tell the truth, it was my duty—to tell the truth about the past, whatever it cost me and whatever risk it entailed for me. It was Lenin who taught us that a party that is not afraid to tell the truth will never perish. We learned the lessons of the past and we wanted the other fraternal parties to learn those lessons too, and then our common victory would be ensured."

Of course, it was not only a matter of the sense of duty that the First Secretary spoke of. I often heard Khrushchev reminiscing about Stalin. They were lengthy, reflective monologues, often lasting many hours; a kind of conversation with himself, with his conscience. He was deeply wounded by Stalinism. There was a mixture of everything here: mystical fear of Stalin, who was capable of destroying anyone for one false step, gesture, or look; and horror at the blood innocently shed. There was a sense of personal guilt and the longing to protest, built up over the centuries, which burst out like steam from a cauldron. . . . In this respect, his (1960) speech at the Kremlin banquet, attended by participants in the conference of representatives of Communist and workers' parties, is characteristic.

The older generation will, of course, remember this strong-willed personality, but the younger generation has

probably never even seen a picture of him. At that time he was already over 60, but he looked very strong, mobile, and cheerful to the point of mischievousness. His broad face with its two warts and his huge bald skull, his large snub nose and his protruding ears, could easily have belonged to a peasant from the middle-Russian countryside. This impression of being, so to speak, of the common people, was intensified by his thick-set, full figure and his long arms, which were almost continuously gesticulating. And only his eyes, small, blue-grey eyes with a keen gaze, eyes that radiated now kindness, now imperiousness and anger, only, I repeat, his eyes revealed the purely political man who had passed through fire and water and was capable of the most abrupt changes of direction.

THAT IS HOW I saw him then and that is how I remember him, although what most attracted me was the speech itself. What I heard he repeated in my presence at least twice more in a different atmosphere, more private, in the presence of only a few people. But the surprising thing is that he repeated this story almost word for word.

"When Stalin died, we members of the Central Committee leadership went to the dacha in Kuntsevo. He was lying on the sofa, and there were no doctors there. In the last months of his life Stalin seldom resorted to the assistance of doctors; he feared them. Perhaps Beria had frightened him or else he himself believed that the doctors were weaving plots against him and the other leaders. At that time he was being treated by a major from the bodyguard, who was once a veterinary officer. He telephoned the news of Stalin's death. . . .

"We stood around the dead body, hardly talking, each thinking his own thoughts. Then we began to disperse. We got into cars in twos. Malenkov and Beria went first, then Molotov and Kaganovich. Then Mikoyan said to me: 'Beria has gone to Moscow to seize power.' And I said to him: 'While that scum is on the scene, none of us can feel safe.' And at that moment the idea that Beria must be removed first of all took firm root in my mind. But how could I start discussions with the other leaders? . . .

"Time passed, and I began calling on the Praesidium members one by one. The most dangerous was Malenkov, he was friends with Laverenty [Beria]. Well, I went to him. 'This is how it is', I said. While he is at liberty and holds the security organs in his hands, all our hands are tied. And there is no knowing what he might do at any moment, what trick he might try. You see', I said, 'For some reason he's bringing the special divisions up to Moscow.'

"And I must give George [Malenkov] his due—he supported me on this matter and surmounted his personal relationship. Evidently he himself was afraid of his friend. And at that time Malenkov was Chairman of the Council of Ministers and conducted the Central Committee Praesidium sessions. In short, he had plenty to lose, but at the end of our conversation he said: 'Yes, you're right, it's inevitable. Only it must be done in such a way as not to

make things worse.'

"Then I went to Voroshilov. I had to spend a long time talking with him. He was very worried that everything might be ruined. Am I right, Klim? [Klim Yefremovich is sitting here. 'Yes, yes', Kliment Yefremovich loudly confirmed. 'As long as there was no war', he added, for some reason, not entirely to the point.]

"Well, as for the war, that's a separate conversation. So then I went to Kaganovich. I explained it all to him, and he said to me: 'Whose side is the majority on? Who is for whom? Won't anyone support him?' But when I told him about all the others, he agreed too.

"And so I went to the session. Everyone sat down, but no Beria. Well, I thought, he's found out. We'll pay for it, in that case. There's no knowing where we will be tomorrow. But then he came in, carrying his briefcase. I immediately guessed what he had in there! I too had something in reserve in case of such an eventuality. . . ."

Here the speaker slapped the right-hand pocket of his jacket and went on:

"Beria sat down, spread himself out and asked: 'Well, what's on the agenda today? Why have we met so unexpectedly?' And I prodded Malenkov with my foot and whispered: 'Open the session, give me the floor.' Malenkov went white; I saw he was incapable of opening his mouth. So I jumped up and said: 'There is one item on the agenda. The anti-Party, divisive activity of imperialist agent Beria. There is a proposal to drop him from the Praesidium and from the Central Committee, expel him from the Party, and hand him over for court martial. Who is in favour?' And I raised my hand first. All the others followed suit. Beria went green—and reached for his briefcase. But I grabbed the briefcase! And snatched it away! 'You're fooling', I said. 'Drop it!' And I pressed a button. Two officers from Moskalenko's military garrison ran in (I had come to an understanding with them beforehand). I then ordered: 'Take this vermin, the traitor of the homeland, and take him to the proper place.' And Beria started to mumble something. . . . Yet he was such a hero when it came to grabbing other people by the scruff of the neck and putting them up against the wall. Well, you know the rest. . . .

"Now, I want to drink [and here he picked up a glass], to such things never happening again, anywhere. We ourselves washed out that filthy stain and we will do everything to create guarantees against such phenomena in the future. I want to assure you, comrades, that we will create such guarantees, and together we will march on, to the heights of Communism!"

I have heard Khrushchev describe his understanding of his role in our country's history. He used to say that Lenin was the organiser of the Revolution and founder of the Party and state, while Stalin, despite his errors, was the man who ensured victory in the bloody war against fascism. Khrushchev saw it as his own mission to give the Soviet people peace and prosperity. He spoke of this repeatedly as the main aim of his activity.

The problem, however, was that he was unclear about the

means of fulfilling these goals. For all his radicalism, he rejected criticism from Palmiro Togliatti, who advised him to seek the roots of the Personality Cult in the system that had grown up—although Togliatti did not, of course, raise the question of replacing socialism with capitalism, but had in mind a change in the régime of personal power itself.

THE THIRST FOR NOVELTY and an energetic nature were characteristic features of Khrushchev. A broad programme of restoration of agriculture, the creation of the regional economic councils, intensive housing construction, the retooling of industry, the passport system in the countryside, pension provision for peasants, increased wages for low-paid categories of working people, the preparation of the new Party programme, the renewal of fundamental laws, the change in the principles and style of relations with the West. And even the famous maize saga. . . . It all reflected the quest for his own paths and solutions, his irrepressible social energy. Khrushchev's time was steeped in spiritual renewal, although this process bore the clear imprint of a past age and was contradictory and often ineffective.

It was Khrushchev who, on his own initiative, set the task of creating firm guarantees against recurrences of the Personality Cult. He waged an uncompromising struggle for this inside the country and in the international arena, and did not count the cost that such a struggle could entail in relations with various countries belonging to the Socialist camp.

Khrushchev attached the main significance to the ideological aspect of the matter, the need to expose the Personality Cult in full, and tell the truth about the crimes of the 1930s and other periods. But, alas, this truth was itself partial and incomplete. From the first, Khrushchev came up against the problem of personal responsibility, because many people in the Party knew about the role he himself played in the persecution of cadres both in the Ukraine and in the Moscow party organisation. Without telling the truth about himself, he could not tell the whole truth about others. Therefore the information about the responsibility of various individuals, not to mention Stalin's own responsibility, for the crimes committed was one-sided and often equivocal. It was dependent on political expediency. For instance, while exposing V. Molotov and L. Kaganovich at the 22nd CPSU Congress for the massacre of cadres in the 1930s, Khrushchev kept quiet about the participation of A. Mikoyan, who subsequently became his reliable ally. In speaking of the 1930s, Khrushchev carefully avoided the period of collectivisation because he was personally involved in the excesses of that time.

Khrushchev tried to form a common attitude to the Stalin Cult in all the members of the Central Committee Praesidium. On his instructions, each representative of the leadership who spoke at the 22nd Congress had to define his attitude to this matter of principle. After the Congress, however, it turned out that many of those who had fulminated against the Personality Cult found it easy to revise their positions and return, basically, to their former views.

The question of guarantees against a repetition anywhere of the Personality Cult and its negative consequences took up

much time in the preparation of the Party programme. I took part in that work. I remember, for instance, the drafting of the memorandum to the Praesidium of the CPSU Central Committee on the transition from the "dictatorship of the proletariat" to the "state of the whole people", which was of great significance, because the stereotype of the dictatorship of the proletariat was used in the 1930s to justify repressions. The memorandum was sent by O. V. Kuusinen and caused a real storm among many leaders. I was in Kuusinen's office when one member of the leadership shouted at him over the telephone: "How could you encroach on the holy of holies of Leninism—the dictatorship of the proletariat?" And it was only thanks to Khrushchev's energetic support that this idea found its way into the Party programme.

ONE PRACTICAL CONCLUSION, talking about the past, was associated with the more consistent implementation of the principle of replaceability of cadres. This question caused more disputes than anything else. The idea of the rotation of cadres, which originated from the First Secretary himself, underwent a series of changes. At least ten versions of formulations were drawn up in the attempt to express it in appropriate form. Khrushchev wanted to set up at least some kind of guarantee against the excessive concentration of power in one person's hands, against leaders "outstaying their time", and against the ageing of cadres at every level, from the primary organisations to the top level. As for the primary organisation, that did not prove particularly contentious. But opinions differed radically on the question of rotation at the top. On this point even he, with his prestige, stubbornness and persistence, had to yield.

The initial draft enshrined principles whereby it was possible to be in the top leadership for no more than two terms. This led to stormy protests from the younger leaders. It seemed to them to be extremely unfair for representatives of the older generation who had already "done their time" to try to limit their opportunities. In the next draft, two terms gave way to three, but even this formula was rejected. In the final text the whole intention—to create a new procedure for the replacement of cadres—was reworked beyond recognition.

The problem of guarantees against a régime of personal



"... and now, comrades, let us stand in silence for two minutes in memory of all those comrades who criticised comrade Stalin while he was alive. . . ."
20 March 1956—Khrushchev admitted to the 20th congress that he had danced the gopek at Stalin's order.
(Vicky)

power met with an insuperable obstacle—the limited political sophistication of Khrushchev himself and the then generation of leaders. Theirs was largely a patriarchal culture, drawn from traditional areas of the forms of leadership within the framework of the peasant household. Paternalism, interference in all kinds of affairs and relations, the infallibility of the patriarch, intolerance of differing opinions—all this made up the typical set of age-old ideas about power in Russia.

In this respect the events that followed the June 1957 plenum were characteristic. At this plenum, as it is known, the representatives of the old “Stalinist guard”, by means of a so-called “arithmetical majority”, sought Khrushchev’s expulsion. As a result of a vote in the Praesidium of the CPSU Central Committee, a resolution was adopted to relieve him of the post of First Secretary. This resolution was, however, overturned thanks to the efforts of ardent Khrushchev supporters. Marshal G. K. Zhukov played an outstanding role in defeating the Stalinists. It was said at the time that during the CPSU Central Committee Praesidium session Zhukov flung in these peoples’ faces the historic remark:

“The Army is against this resolution, and not one tank will move from the spot without my orders.”

This remark eventually cost him his political career.

Soon after the June plenum Khrushchev managed to relieve G. K. Zhukov of his post as member of the Praesidium of the CPSU Central Committee and USSR Defence Minister. This was done in the traditional spirit of the time—while the Marshal was on a foreign trip. He was not given the slightest opportunity to explain himself, just as the Party and the people were not given the necessary explanation of the reasons for the removal from the political arena of the outstanding military leader of the Great Fatherland War. And the reason for his removal was also traditional—fear of a strong man.

MOREOVER, A CONSIDERABLE PART was played here by a certain weakness on the part of Khrushchev as a leader. He had long since acquired the reputation of a man who goes about in “worn-out slippers”. His inability to judge cadres was also observed as early as the period of his work in Kiev, and later in Moscow. He was always inclined to trust flatterers rather than the true supporters of his reforming transformations. That is why he surrounded himself with people like N. Podgorny, for instance, people who hung on his every word and were ready to carry out any instructions of his. And that is why he was not very impressed by self-sufficient, large-scale personalities and independent spirits. Khrushchev was too sure of himself to seek support in others. And that was one reason for his downfall. People who, deep down, did not share his reforming views deemed them to be a manifestation of incompetence or even stupidity, and at the first convenient opportunity they got rid of him. . . .

True, at one time Khrushchev was drawn towards the more educated cadres in the Party apparatus. Suffice it to recall his attitude toward D. Shepilov, whom he promoted to the posts of Central Committee Secretary and Foreign Minister. But Shepilov’s conduct during the June (1957) plenum of the

CPSU Central Committee turned Khrushchev against “these intellectuals” for good.

Khrushchev’s relations with the intelligentsia were also affected by his haste, and his desire to intervene in every issue and resolve it quickly. Here he was often the plaything of self-interested advisers, and sometimes even covert opponents who were planning his downfall. I remember well that his visit to the art exhibition at the Manege was provoked by a specially prepared catalogue. It said little about the problems of art, but cited genuine or invented remarks by writers and artists about Khrushchev, calling him the “Jester on the throne”, the “Corn Man”, the “Chatterbox”. Driven to his wits’ end, Khrushchev set off for the Manege to give the artists a piece of his mind. By the same method, Khrushchev’s covert opponents inveigled him into the L. Pasternak episode, secured, through him, A. Nesmeyanov’s removal from the post of President of the USSR Academy of Sciences in favour of Lysenka, and set him against many representatives of literature, art, and science.

A MAN GOES FARTHEST when he does not know where he is going, the ancients used to say. But then his march is meandering and uneven—now he forges rapidly ahead, now he falls back drastically. That is how many of Khrushchev’s economic and social reforms looked.

Economic policy was one of the most vulnerable areas of his activity. He saw the task mainly as one of changing the methods of economic leadership at apparatus level—in the State Planning Committee, the regional economic councils and the ministries—but he did not recognise the significance of profound structural reforms which change working and living-conditions for the actual producers—workers, peasants, and the scientific and technical intelligentsia.

This approach had a particularly unfavourable effect on preparations for the 1961 Party programme. The most contentious issue was the proposal to incorporate in the programme statistical material on the country’s economic development and the course of economic competition in the world arena. This proposal was submitted to one of the sessions by A. Zasyadko (Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers State Scientific Economic Council). The report he presented within the framework of a working party seemed to all the participants to be frivolous and unscientific. Calculations on the rate of development of the Soviet economy and the US economy were more or less plucked out of the air—they expressed wishes, not reality.

But Zasyadko himself, easily put an end to the debate that had flared up. He opened the first page of a blue-covered booklet containing a typescript of approximately 80 pages, and pointed to the resolution: “To be incorporated in the programme”, and the familiar signature of the First Secretary. Thus statistical calculations showing how we would catch up and overtake the USA in the 1980s were incorporated in the Party programme. Passions ran high, but, as the saying goes, ambition is not enough; you need ammunition too.

But it is necessary to try to imagine the general spirit of

the time. Although not many people believed in Zasyadko's figures, we had plenty of enthusiasm and optimism. And these feelings were by no means built on sand; everyone was convinced that the new programme opened a stage of major structural transformations and developments—otherwise there was no point in adopting and approving a new programme. And not even Khrushchev's departure stopped the work. A CPSU Central Committee plenum on economic reform was held in September 1965, after all. But Brezhnev's negative attitude to it nullified the efforts of the preceding era.

Matters were even worse when it came to transformations in the sphere of state administration and the structure of Party leadership. Who "fed" Khrushchev the idea of dividing *oblast* and *rayon* party committees into industrial and agricultural ones? Intuitively, I am convinced that it was done not without malice—in order decisively to undermine his prestige among Party leaders.

These errors were laid at Khrushchev's door at the October (1964) plenum of the CPSU Central Committee. At this plenum a strange symbiosis of political forces was formed—from advocates of consistent progress along the path of the 20th Congress to conservatives and crypto-Stalinists, they all rallied against the leader who had helped the majority of them "to the top". Subsequent events left no room for doubt that Khrushchev was removed not so much for voluntarism as for his insatiable thirst for change. The slogan of "*Stability*" put forward by his successors delayed the urgently needed reforms for a long time. The very word "*Reform*", as well as any mention of the 20th Congress, became dangerous, and cost many supporters of this course their political careers.

TIME HAS NOT DISPELLED the countless myths that gathered around Khrushchev's name in our country and abroad. Sharing the fate of other reformers, Khrushchev did not win objective recognition in the mass-consciousness. The people who once elevated Ivan the Terrible and condemned Boris Godunov could not accept, after Stalin, a public figure lacking in mystical magic, earthy and fallible, subject to errors and delusions. During the "Thaw" period a remark about Stalin was attributed to Sholokhov: "Of course there was a cult, but there was a personality too." This was a veiled reproach to Khrushchev as a far less significant figure—a reproach to the man who, like Shakespeare's Claudius, seized the crown that fell at his feet.

Meanwhile, in Western countries they put Nikita Khrush-

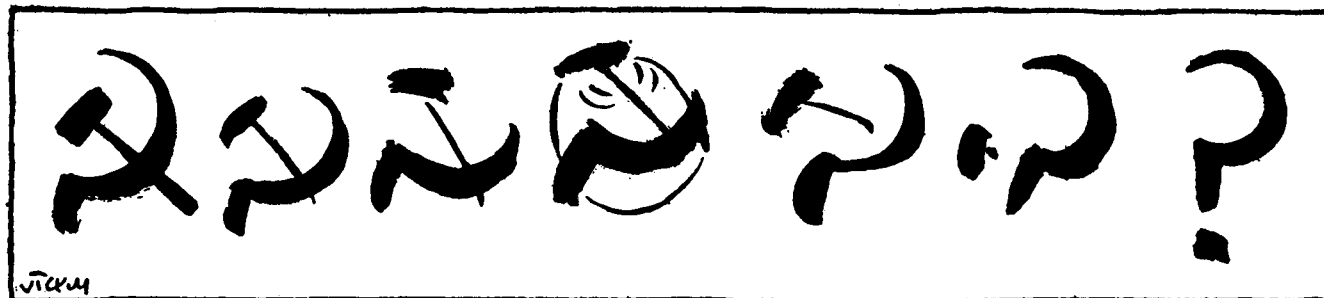
chev on a level with John Kennedy and Pope John XXIII, and saw the fact that these leaders, who for various reasons, left the political arena, as the source of a deterioration in the international climate in the late 1960s. A great many books came out devoted to analysing "Khrushchevism" as a new current in socialism.

YOU COULD SAY: A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country—but that would be inaccurate. This is a more profound and complex matter. Ernst Neizvestnyy, with whom Khrushchev conducted his dashing polemics at the Manege, perhaps came closer than anyone else to an assessment of Khrushchev. The monument that the sculptor created on Khrushchev's grave—a bronze head on a background of black and white marble slabs—successfully symbolised the contradictory nature of the "Thaw" and its central character.

Now, nearly a quarter of a century later, in comparing the periods before and after October 1964, we can see more clearly Khrushchev's strength and weakness. His main merit was that he crushed Stalin's Personality Cult. This proved irreversible, despite all the cowardly attempts to set up the pedestal in its former place. It did not work. Which means that the ploughing was deep enough. And that means that the ploughman did not labour in vain. The courageous decision to rehabilitate many Communists and non-Party people who were subjected to repressions and executions in the period of the Personality Cult restored justice, truth, and honour in the life of the Party and state. A mighty blow, if not in every respect effective and bold, was struck against over-centralism, bureaucracy, and bureaucratic arrogance.

In Khrushchev's time the foundations were laid for a breakthrough in the development of agriculture—purchase prices were increased, the tax burden was reduced drastically, new technologies began to be used. The opening up of the "Virgin Lands", for all its shortcomings, played a part in providing the population with food. Khrushchev tried to point the countryside towards foreign experience and the first agricultural revolution. And even his enthusiasm for maize was dictated by good intentions, although accompanied by naive extremes. Gigantism in the countryside and the reduction in farmstead plots also had a bad effect.

Let us recall that Khrushchev's name is associated with major achievements in the sphere of science and technology, which made it possible to lay the foundations for achieving strategic parity. To this day everyone can still see the meeting between Yuriy Gagarin and Khrushchev, which marked our country's breakthrough into space. "Peaceful coexistence",



proclaimed at the 20th CPSU Congress, after undergoing a shock in the period of the Caribbean crisis, became an increasingly firm platform for agreements and business-like compromises with the West. The Helsinki Final Act, which consolidated the results of the Second World War and proclaimed new international relations, economic cooperation and the exchange of information, ideas and people, has its roots in the era of the "Thaw".

At that time he embarked on the solution of many social problems. The living standard of the population in the cities and the countryside began to improve gradually. However, the planned economic and social reforms misfired. A serious blow was struck against the reformers' hopes by the tragic events in Hungary in 1956. But not the least important part was played by Nikita Sergeyevich's self-confidence, his lack of concern for problems of theory and political strategy. "Khrushchevism" as a prospectus for the renewal of Socialism did not work. To use the favourite metaphor of the First Secretary's main opponent, Mao Zedong, Khrushchev walked on two feet: one was stepping boldly into a new era, while the other was inextricably bogged down in the quagmire of the past.

IN ANSWER TO the question of why the reforms suffered defeat in the 1960s, one could also say this: conservative forces were able to prevail over the reformers because the administrative apparatus and the whole of society were not yet ready for radical changes. But that answer is too general. It is necessary to try to clarify what it was that the conservatives took advantage of.

One of the mistakes was, in my view, the fact that the quest for a prospectus for reforms and a means of implementing them was based on traditional administrative and even bureaucratic methods. Khrushchev usually issued instructions to "study" particular problems—economic, cultural, political—to the ministries and departments, that is, to the administrative apparatus itself, which was to limit its own power. But the apparatus always found a way to protect itself against control, through direct, indirect, or ambiguous decisions.

More or less successful reforms, both in socialist and capitalist countries, have usually been planned by a group of experts, chiefly scientists and public figures, working under the leadership of the country's leader. This was the case, for instance, in Hungary, Yugoslavia, and China. In Japan, I met

Professor Okita, who is regarded as the author of the Japanese "miracle". In the Federal Republic of Germany, a plan of reforms was drawn up at one time by Professor Ludwig Erhard, who subsequently became the country's Chancellor.

The second thing is that "the people were silent". Now, on the basis of the experience of *glasnost*, we can see particularly clearly how little was done to inform people about the past, about the real problems, about the planned solutions, to say nothing of involving the broadest strata of the public in the struggle for reforms. How many times, during these days, have I heard: "But in what way was Khrushchev better than Stalin? Under Stalin at least there was order, they jailed the bureaucrats, and the prices came down." It was no accident that at the time of the CPSU Central Committee October plenum in 1964, virtually a majority throughout society heaved a sigh of relief and hopefully awaited changes for the better.

ONE LAST LESSON. It concerns Khrushchev himself. This man of keen, innate political intelligence, bold and energetic, could not resist the charms of praise of his own personality. "Our Nikita Sergeyevich!" Was not this the beginning of the fall from grace, for the acknowledged fighter against the Cult? The limpets drowned him in a sea of flattery and praise, receiving in return high posts, the top awards, bonuses and titles. And it is no accident that the worse matters were in the country, the louder and more triumphant the chorus of limpets and flatterers lauding the successes of the "great decade".

The ancients used to say: "Character is a man's guiding destiny." Nikita Khrushchev was the victim of his own character, not only the victim of the environment. Haste, rashness, and emotionalism were unconquerable characteristics of his.

One of Khrushchev's assistants told me about an amazing conversation that his boss had with Winston Churchill. It was at the time of the visit to Britain by Khrushchev and Bulganin in 1956. They met Churchill, as I recall, at a reception at the Soviet Embassy. This is what the old British lion said: "Mr Khrushchev, you are launching great reforms. And that is good! I would only like to advise you not to be in too much of a hurry. It is not easy to cross an abyss in two jumps. You might fall in. . . ." I would venture to add on my own account: Nor can you cross an abyss when you do not know which bank you are trying to jump onto.

Going To Write

Each blank new day he enters the room; he enters it alone. Some characters chat, their hubbub bubbles as he hunts to see a friendly face. He thinks of this and that then smooths his lapels and straightens his tie. He may drift, clearing his throat, towards two lovers then, tongue-tied, pass silently by

to get himself a drink. "What do you do?" a voice asks. He says nothing. And wonders why he will accept these invitations when mostly he just mutters and blunders and grabs in despair for conversations. At times he'd like to turn and run away, not try to reach these strangers every day.

Jim C. Wilson



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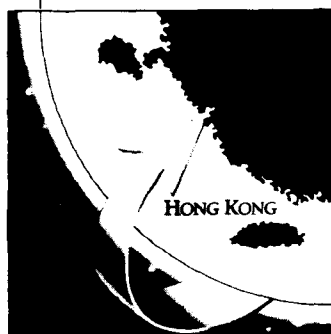
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LANGUAGE

Metaphor & Allusion

Words of Islam—By BERNARD LEWIS



IN IRAN in 1979 a series of events began which brought profound changes not only in the government but also in the whole society of that country, with consequences reaching far beyond the Iranian frontiers. For these changes, those who accomplished them claimed the title “revolutionary”; most outsiders, with whatever reservations, have accepted that claim.

Revolutions express themselves differently, and each has its own way of formulating its critique of the past and its aspirations for the future. The French Revolution, with its ideological background in the 18th-century Enlightenment, formulated its ideals as liberty, equality, fraternity. The Russian Revolution, with a background in 19th-century socialism, set forth its plans for the future in terms of a classless state to be achieved through a dictatorship of the proletariat. The Iranian Revolution presents itself in terms of Islam, that is to say, as a religious movement with a religious leadership, a religiously formulated critique of the old order, and religiously expressed plans for the new. While the Jacobins thought of themselves as Roman Republicans, and the Bolsheviks were concerned to repeat or avoid the various events of the French Revolution, Muslim revolutionaries looked to the birth of Islam as

their paradigm, and saw themselves as engaged in a struggle against paganism, oppression, and empire, to establish, or rather restore, a true Islamic order.

Major revolutions have a resonance far beyond the countries in which they occur. Both the French and Russian revolutions evoked an enormous response, and exercised immense influence in the whole European and Christian world of which both pre-revolutionary France and pre-revolutionary Russia were a part and with which they shared a common universe of discourse. The eager response of a young Englishman of the time to the earth-shaking events in revolutionary Paris was expressed by William Wordsworth in the famous lines,

*Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!*

Similar sentiments have been expressed, in somewhat different words, by Muslim observers of the Iranian Revolution, as far away as South-east Asia and western Africa, and among the Muslim national minority in Communist-ruled Yugoslavia.¹ The Iranian Revolution too has had an enormous impact all over the world with which it shares a common general and political culture. That culture is defined by Islam.

When we in the Western world, nurtured in the Western tradition, use the words “Islam” and “Islamic”, we tend to make a natural error and assume that religion means the same for Muslims as it has meant in the Western world, even in medieval times—that is to say, a section or compartment of life reserved for certain matters, and separate, or at least separable, from other compartments of life designed to hold other matters. That is not so in the Islamic world. It was never so in the past; and the attempt in modern times to make it so may perhaps be seen, in the longer perspective of history, as an unnatural aberration which in Iran has ended and in some other Islamic countries may also be nearing its end.

In classical Islam there was no distinction between Church and State. In Christendom the existence of two authorities goes back to the founder, who enjoined his followers to render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and to God the things which are God's. Throughout the history of Christendom there have been two powers: God and Caesar, represented in this world by *sacerdotium* and *regnum*, or, in modern times, Church and State. They may be associated,

¹ In 1968, the Federal government of Yugoslavia allowed Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina to register as a “nationality”. Later, persons in other republics professing the Muslim faith were allowed to opt for this “nationality” if they wished. Muslims with a small *m* were followers of a religion; Muslims with a capital *M* constituted one of the nationalities of which the Yugoslav population is composed.

This term is not territorial, since the Muslim nationality has no defined territory, and Muslims live in several of the constituent republics of the Yugoslav Federation. They are not merely a religious community, since religion as such has no place in the constitutional structure or legal apparatus of a Communist state. Nor are they definable as an ethnic or linguistic group, since Yugoslav Muslims, in different parts of the country, speak Serbo-Croat, Albanian, Macedonian, or Turkish.

they may be separated; they may be in harmony, they may be in conflict; one may dominate, the other may dominate; one may interfere, the other may protest (as we are now learning again). But always there are two, the spiritual and the temporal powers, each with its own laws and jurisdictions, its own structure and hierarchy.

In pre-Westernised Islam, there were not two powers but one, and the question of separation, therefore, could not arise. The distinction between Church and State, so deeply rooted in Christendom, did not exist in Islam; and in classical Arabic, as well as in other languages which derive their intellectual and political vocabulary from classical Arabic, there were no pairs of words corresponding to spiritual and temporal, lay and ecclesiastical, religious and secular. It was not until the 19th and 20th centuries, and then under the influence of Western ideas and institutions, that new words were found, first in Turkish and then in Arabic, to express the idea of secular.²

Even in modern usage, there is no Muslim equivalent to "the Church", meaning "ecclesiastical organisation". All the different words for mosque denote only a building which is a place of worship, not an abstraction, an authority, or an institution. One might perhaps discern, in the post-classical evolution of the professional men of religion, some approximation to a clergy, and such terms as "ulema" and "mollahs" almost acquire this sense. But there is no equivalent to the term "laity", a meaningless expression in the context of Islam. At the present time, the very notion of a secular jurisdiction and authority—of a so-to-speak unsanctified part of life that lies outside the scope of religious law and those who uphold it—is seen as an impiety, indeed as the ultimate betrayal of Islam. The righting of this wrong is the principal aim of Islamic revolutionaries and, in general, of those described as Islamic fundamentalists.³

THIS DEFINITION OF political identity and loyalty by religious belief, or to be more precise, by religious adherence, is not limited to the revolutionaries. For many years now there has been an active international grouping, at the United Nations and elsewhere, consisting of more than 40 Muslim governments, which together constitute the so-called Islamic Bloc. This includes monarchies and republics, conservatives and

radicals, exponents of capitalism and of socialism, supporters of the Western Bloc, of the Eastern Bloc, and of a whole spectrum of shades of neutrality. They have built up an elaborate apparatus of international consultation and, on many issues, cooperation; they hold regular high-level conferences, and despite differences of structure, ideology, and policy, they have achieved a significant measure of agreement and common action. In this the Islamic peoples are in sharp contrast with those who profess other religions.

THE POLITICAL RELEVANCE of Islam is internal as well as external. In all but one of the sovereign states with a clear Muslim majority, Islam is the state religion; many of them have clauses in the Constitutions establishing the Holy Law of Islam as either the basis of law or the major source of legislation. The one exception is the Turkish republic, which under the guidance of its first president, Kemal Atatürk, adopted a series of laws in the 1920s the effect of which was to disestablish Islam, to repeal the Holy Law, and to lay down the legal separation of religion and the state. These laws have remained in force, but their effect has been somewhat diminished by the re-introduction of compulsory religious education in the state schools, the full participation of Turkey in Islamic Bloc activities, and, as parliamentary democracy has taken root in the country, the increasing tendency of political parties to raise religious issues in order to bring out the peasant vote.

What then is the power, the attraction of Islam, both as a claim to allegiance and as a revolutionary appeal? This is a large and complex question, from which at this point I would like to emphasise a few major themes.

The first which seems to me relevant is that in most Muslim countries Islam is still the ultimate criterion of group identity and loyalty. It is Islam which distinguishes between self and other, between insider and outsider, between brother and stranger. We in the Western world have become accustomed to other criteria of classification, by nation, by country, and by various subdivisions of these. Both nation and country are, of course, old facts in the Islamic world; but as definitions of political identity and loyalty they are modern and intrusive notions. In some countries, these notions have become more

² The Turkish word was a neologism, *ladini*, with the literal meaning of "non-religious". This term, coined by the famous sociologist and nationalist theoretician Ziya Gökalp, was often taken to mean "irreligious" or even "anti-religious", and these interpretations further increased the hostility with which the notion was received. Later it was replaced by *lâyik*, a loan-word from the French.

Arabic adopted a term from the usage of the Christian Arabs, who needed to express this notion long before it aroused the interest or concern of the Muslims. The word they created was *'ālamānī*, from *'ālam*, "world", thus meaning worldly, as opposed to the other-worldly or spiritual. In modern times, it has been revocalised and is pronounced *'ilmānī*, and it is taken to mean scientific, from *'ilm*, "knowledge" or "science", as opposed to religious. This is an entirely mistaken etymology and interpretation.

³ It is now common usage to apply the term "fundamentalist" to a number of Islamic radical and militant groups. The use of this term is established and must be accepted, but it remains unfortunate and can be misleading.

"Fundamentalist" is a Christian term. It seems to have come into use in the early years of this century, and denotes certain Protestant churches and organisations, more particularly those which maintain the literal divine origin and inerrancy of the Bible. In this they oppose the liberal and modernist theologians, who tend to a more critical historical view of Scripture. Among Muslim theologians there is as yet no such liberal or modernist approach to the Qur'ān, and all Muslims, in their attitude to the text of the Qur'ān, are, in principle at least, fundamentalists.

Where the so-called Muslim fundamentalists differ from other Muslims and indeed from Christian fundamentalists is in their scholasticism and their legalism. They base themselves not only on the Qur'ān, but also on the Traditions of the Prophet, and on the corpus of transmitted theological and legal learning. Their aim is nothing less than to abrogate all the imported and modernised legal codes and social norms, and in their place to install and enforce the full panoply of the *sharī'a*—its rules and penalties, its jurisdiction, and its prescribed form of government.

or less acclimatised. But there is a recurring tendency in times of crisis, in times of emergency, when the deeper loyalties take over, for Muslims to find their basic identity in the religious community; that is to say, in an entity defined by Islam rather than by ethnic origin, language, or country of habitation.

And just as the insider is defined by his acceptance of Islam, so in the same way the outsider is defined by his rejection of Islam. He is the *kāfir*, "the unbeliever", i.e., he who does not believe in the apostolate of Muhammad and the authenticity of the revelation which he brought. The languages of Islam, like those of the civilisations of antiquity, of Christendom, and of Asia, have words to denote the stranger, the foreigner, the barbarian.⁴ But from the time of the Prophet to the present day, the ultimate definition of the Other, the alien outsider and presumptive enemy, has been the *kāfir*, the unbeliever.

A second related point is that for many, probably most, Muslims, Islam is still the most acceptable, indeed in times of crisis the only acceptable, basis of authority. Political domination can be maintained for a while by mere force, but not indefinitely, not over large areas for long periods. For this there has to be some legitimacy in government, and this purpose, for Muslims, is most effectively accomplished when the ruling authority derives its legitimacy from Islam rather than from merely nationalist, patriotic, or even dynastic claims—still less from such Western notions as national or popular sovereignty. In political life, Islam still offers the most widely intelligible formulation of ideas, on the one hand of social norms and laws, on the other, of new ideals and aspirations. And, as recent events have repeatedly demonstrated, Islam provides the most effective system of symbols for political mobilisation, whether to arouse the people in defence of a régime that is perceived as possessing the necessary legitimacy or against a régime which is perceived as lacking that legitimacy; in other words, as not being Islamic or, perhaps, as having forfeited that legitimacy by no longer being Islamic.

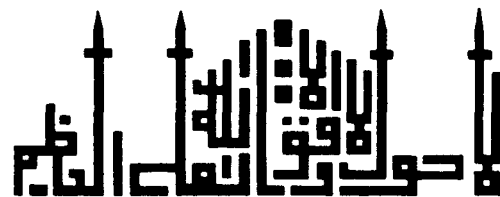
IN ORDER TO APPROACH some understanding of the politics of Islam, of movements and changes which are perceived and expressed in Islamic terms, we must try to understand the language of political discourse among Muslims, the way in which words are used and understood, the framework of metaphor and allusion which is a necessary part of all communication.

⁴ Many terms are used to denote outsiders. Thus, Arab is contrasted with '*Ajam*', which originally simply meant non-Arab and was then often specialised to mean the Persians, who were, so to speak, the non-Arabs *par excellence* on the horizon of ancient Arabia.

In later Arabic usage, '*Ajam*' is used almost exclusively in the sense of "Persian". In Turkish, by a development of the earlier usage, the adjectival form '*ajemi*' (modern Turkish *acemi*) sometimes has the sense of "clumsy" or "inept". The classical Arabic term '*ilj*', plural '*ulāj*', with the meaning, among others, of "gross", "coarse", is sometimes contrasted with '*Arab*', and has the sense, more or less, of "barbarian".

It does not necessarily have a religious connotation, as is shown by the fact that a Syrian Christian author like Ibn al-ʿIbri uses it

We must look beyond the contemporary language of politics in the Muslim world, which has been profoundly affected (some might say distorted) over the last century or more by the external influences. To understand the changes, we must go back to the time before the massive impact of Western power and thought, a time when the Islamic world was still developing according to other cultural traditions, some of them indeed pre-Islamic or non-Islamic, but all of them different from those of the modern West.



THIS CULTURE was expressed in three languages, Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, which prevailed all over South-west Asia and northern Africa. Linguistically, these three languages are of different and unrelated groups—as remote from each other as English, Hebrew, and Hungarian.⁵ Culturally, however, they are very close, sharing a common script and an enormous vocabulary of loan-words, covering the whole range of both political thought and practice. Great numbers of Muslims live outside the Middle Eastern Islamic heartlands—indeed, by now the Muslims of South and South-east Asia vastly outnumber the Arabic-, Persian-, and Turkish-speaking Muslims of the Middle East. But they have developed their own political and other cultures, much influenced by those of the regions in which they live. Their relevance to the Middle Eastern culture is minimal, and they are therefore not considered here.

The origins of Islamic political language, as of other aspects of Islam, must be sought in the Qurʾān, the Traditions of the Prophet, and the practice of the early Muslims. These in turn have their roots in ancient Arabia, and in the different religious beliefs, Christian, Jewish, and pagan, which existed there at the time of the advent of Islam. But the great extension of the Islamic polity and community under the early caliphs, until it embraced a vast region extending from Europe and the Atlantic at one end to the approaches to India and China at the other, subjected the new faith and civilisation, when they were still young and malleable, to a

when speaking of the Franks. It has disappeared from modern usage.

The Arabic term *Barbar* or *Barbarī*, akin to the Greek *Barbaros*, is normally limited to the pre-Arab inhabitants of North Africa and, in Egyptian usage, to the black peoples of the upper Nile. It is sometimes given to other unfamiliar neighbours, e.g., the Mongol-descended Hazāra in Afghanistan, but it does not carry a connotation of barbarism.

⁵ Arabic is a Semitic language, of the same family as Hebrew, Aramaic, and Ethiopic. Persian is Indo-European, and thus is related to the major languages of India and Europe. Turkish is one of the Altaic group of languages, distantly related, according to a generally accepted view, to Finnish, Estonian and Hungarian.

great variety of influences. The Zoroastrians of the eastern provinces, the Christians of the central and western provinces, and—less important—the surviving Jewish minorities living among both, all made their contribution.

The practice of the Persian and Roman Empires, from which the new Islamic Empire acquired most of its provinces and most of its imperial administrative personnel, also helped to shape the processes and principles of government of Islam itself. The translation into Arabic, from the 8th century, of Persian manuals of statecraft and court etiquette and of Greek treatises on political philosophy⁶ gave a new sophistication to Islamic discourse on these matters. The rich and flexible Arabic language of politics was further enriched by loan-words and, to a vastly greater extent, loan translations of Persian and Greek and even Latin terms. Some of these go back to the earliest times. Even in the Qur'ān itself, Mecca is referred to as *Umm al-Qurā*, a literal translation of the Greek *metropolis*. The Straight Road, *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, which Muslims are enjoined to follow, is the straight Roman road, and *ṣirāṭ* is none other than the Latin *strata*, from which we also derive the English word "street".⁷

CLOSER ACQUAINTANCE with Roman and Byzantine practice in the conquered provinces brought many more terms of this kind. Some are easily recognisable, such as *shurṭa*, "the cohort charged with police duties". Others wear an Arabic-Islamic disguise, such as the *Muhtasib*, a kind of inspector of morals and markets, who inherited the functions of the Byzantine *agoranomos*. There were similar borrowings from the eastern provinces. The administrative offices in which the servants of the government conducted their business, in Arabic called *diwān*,⁸ clearly derive their name from a Persian antecedent. The chief of the diwans, the *wazīr*,⁹ bore a title which was etymologically Arabic but owed much of its development to Iranian imperial precedent.

By the 11th century, Arabic had absorbed these cultural borrowings from the ancient empires, and merged them in a new and vigorous political culture that was distinctively

Islamic. It was then compelled to undergo a second major transformation, resulting from the movement of the steppe peoples into the heartlands of Islam. From the north and from the east came first the Turks and then the Mongols, in a series of waves of migration extending from the 11th to the 14th centuries.

Unlike the Persians, the Greeks, and the ancient peoples of the Middle East, the Turks and Mongols were never conquered by Islam. On the contrary, they entered the Islamic world as conquerors, some of them freely converted in their homelands, some of them, the Mongols, arriving as pagan aliens and imposing a pagan domination over the Muslims.

DURING THESE four centuries, and for long afterwards, the Islamic world of the Middle East was dominated by dynasties, and not only dynasties, but states and armies, of Turkish and Mongol origin. These, as well as imposing a new domination, also established a new and different pattern of government and association, which reached its apotheosis in the great empires of the post-Mongol period, in Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and India. These empires had a stability, a permanence, and a regularity in their administrative structures without precedent in classical Islam. They also brought with them a new vocabulary from the steppe languages and gave new meanings to words already in use. In the civilisation of the Ottoman Empire, Arabic, Persian, and Turkish were harmoniously combined as the three instruments of a general and, more specifically, a political culture which shaped the destinies of much of the Middle East for half a millennium and is by no means extinct even at the present day.

During the last two centuries or so—more in some areas, less in others—the thought world of Islam has once again been transformed by an external impact, this time from Europe. This was, in many ways, the most difficult of all to absorb. The Europeans who came in the 19th and 20th centuries were not conquered subjects like the Persians and the

⁶ For English translations, see Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi, eds., *Medieval Political Philosophy* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1963). For an introductory account, see E. I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline* (Cambridge, 1958).

⁷ Another Latin loanword in the Qur'ān is *qaṣr*, "castle", from *castrum*. This word returned from Arabic to Europe via the Spanish Alcazar, al-Qaṣr.

⁸ Various etymologies, both Arabic and Persian, have been suggested for *diwān*. The two most commonly cited in classical sources derive it from the Arabic verb *dawwana*, "to collect" or "to register", or from the Persian *divāne*, "mad", i.e., possessed by a *dēv*, or "devil". The latter is usually accompanied by a story telling how the Persian Emperor Khusru entered one of his government offices and, astonished by the demented-seeming noise and demeanour of the secretaries, exclaimed "*Divāne*", "Mad", whence the office took its name. The latter version is obviously a humorous popular etymology; the former relies on what is almost certainly a denominative verb, formed in Arabic from a borrowed Persian substantive.

Another explanation relates *diwān* to the Iranian root *dipi*, "to write", whence also *dabīr*, "a scribe", and *defter*, "a register", "record", or "account book", from the Greek *diphthera*, "a hide prepared for writing"—itself a loan-word from Old Persian. In Arabic and Islamic Persian *diwān* normally means "a government depart-

ment or office". Later meanings are the ruler's court or council; the collected poems of a poet (i.e., ordered and classified); a senior government minister or official (India only); a board, a public session (Ottoman), and hence an audience, a levee, a court (of justice); a sofa or couch (Ottoman). In the forms *aduana*, *douane*, etc., it passed into the Romance languages with the meaning of "customs", or "custom-duties".

⁹ Under the classical caliphate there was one *wazīr* only, who was chief of the entire administrative apparatus and was the nearest and most powerful helper of the sovereign. He was a civilian, and his emblem of office was an ink-pot.

Under the later medieval rulers and the early Ottomans, the vizierate underwent a number of changes and was at times militarised, at times multiplied, with a group of *wazīrs* serving under a chief. This was, for a while, the Ottoman practice and gave rise to the conventional Western rendering "Grand Vizier", by which the Ottoman chief minister was known in Europe. His title in Turkish—and that of his analogue in Iran—was *Sadriazam* (Perso-Arabic *Ṣadr-i A'zam*). The form "vizier" derives from the Turkish pronunciation of the Arabic *wazīr*.

In modern Arabic and Persian, but not Turkish, *wazīr* is used as the equivalent of minister, in the sense both of diplomatic representative and political head of a government department.

Greeks, ready and indeed eager to serve their new masters. Nor were they teachable recruits to the Islamic faith and culture, like the Turks and the Mongols, who came as conquerors but soon became the valiant defenders of Islam against its enemies. These came and remained as aliens, accepting neither the faith nor the culture of the Muslim peoples over whom they ruled. This time it was the Muslims who were either conquered or in imminent danger of conquest, and who were forced to learn the ways of the new masters of the world, in order to survive. Some Muslims, incorporated in the four great empires of Russia, Holland, Britain, and France, had, perforce, to submit to European political rule or influence. Others tried to master the secrets of European political success, so to resist domination or, failing that, to end it.

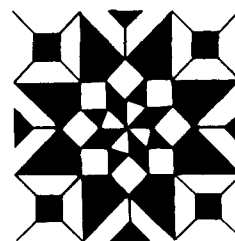
The result of all this was a transformation of government, both as practised and as perceived, and a recasting of ideas and words more comprehensive than anything that either the Graeco-Persian renaissance of the early Middle Ages, or the Turko-Mongol domination of the later, had accomplished.

IF WE COMPARE Western and Islamic political language, we shall find that they have much in common. Much of this resemblance is due to our common human predicament—to our living in the same physical world, experiencing the same basic needs, and, often, encountering the same problems. Similar problems may naturally produce similar solutions. Part of the resemblance is historical, and it is attested by a shared vocabulary, of Greek and Latin loan-words and loan-translations in Arabic and, to a lesser extent, words of Arabic origin in the languages of Europe.

Islamic and Christian civilisations were never as remote and alien to one another as were, for example, the ancient civilisations and religions of India and China. Islamic civilisation first flourished in or near the Mediterranean lands, and in many important areas shares a common heritage with Christendom. Greek philosophy and science, Judaeo-Christian revelation and law, have an important place in the Islamic culture and heritage, and made possible a level of communication between Christians and Muslims, even in the most fanatical medieval societies, that was intellectually impossible for either to achieve with, say, Hindus or Buddhists.

But despite these resemblances, there are still enormous differences, and these are particularly clear in the language of political assertion, denunciation, and appeal. Muslims revere

different scriptures—not the Bible but the Qur'ān. They are nurtured on different classics, and draw inspiration and guidance from a different history. Few if any civilisations in the past have attached as much importance to history as did Islam, in its education, in its awareness of itself, in the common language of everyday talk. Even today, in the bitter war that is being waged between Iraq and Iran, the war propaganda of both sides makes frequent allusions to events of the 7th and 8th centuries.¹⁰ There can be little doubt that these references are recognised by the vast majority of people in both countries, and indeed elsewhere in the Muslim world, and that the force of the allusions is well understood.



UNTIL VERY RECENTLY, history—that is to say significant, usable history—for Muslim historians meant the history of Islam. And of the events in the history of Islam, the most significant, thus the most usable, were those of the early centuries, the life of the Prophet and his immediate successors, which constitute the sacred history, one might even say the salvation history, of Islam and form the core of the historic self-awareness of Muslims everywhere.

In Christendom, the sacred history is imprinted on the minds of the faithful in a number of ways—through teaching and texts, but also through statuary, through pictures, through stained-glass windows, through music. Apart from certain deviant groups, Islam has none of these. The ban on images has effectively precluded any development of religious representational art, while the Islamic mistrust of music inhibited the development of liturgy. Islam has no hymns, no fugues, no icons. The interior decoration of the mosque consists of texts, mostly from the Qur'ān. In Islamic lands the art of calligraphy, in particular the writing of sacred texts, attained the level of a major votive art, of great depth and subtlety. In a profound sense, the Qur'anic and other texts that adorn the walls and pillars of Muslim mosques are the hymns and fugues and icons of Islam.

¹⁰ Thus, for example, a series of Iranian offensives against the Iraqi forces was code-named *Karbalā'*, after a battle that was fought in A.D. 680. This was the occasion when the grandson and family of the Prophet, along with their faithful Shi'ite supporters, were massacred in a hopeless fight against the armies of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd. At the same time, Iranian war propaganda denounces the Iraqi leader Ṣaddām Ḥusayn as the Yazīd of our time.

The Iraqis, on their side, call the Iranians *Furs*, a somewhat derogatory term in medieval times, with a suggestion that the Persians were the heirs of the Zoroastrians defeated at the battle of Qādisiyya in A.D. 637. This battle, which shattered the military power of the Iranian emperors and led to the incorporation of all their lands and peoples in the Muslim Arab Empire, is claimed with pride by both sides. For the Iraqis, it was a victory of Arabs over

Persians, and the first decisive step in the conquest of Iran. For the soldiers of the Islamic Republic, it was a victory of Muslims over heathens, and a blessed beginning of the Islamisation of the peoples of Iran.

This kind of historic allusion is by no means limited to Iraq and Iran. The Egyptian assault on the Israeli Bar Lev Line in October 1973 was code-named *Badr*, the name of a military victory won by the prophet Muhammad over the pagan Arabs of Mecca. The formations of the Palestine Liberation Army are named after major victories won by Muslims against non-Muslims in medieval times—the battle of the Yarmūk against the Byzantine Christians (A.D. 636), the battle of Qādisiyya against the Zoroastrian Persians, the battle of Ḥaṭṭīn against the Crusaders (A.D. 1187), and the battle of 'Ayn Jālūt, against the heathen Mongols (A.D. 1260).

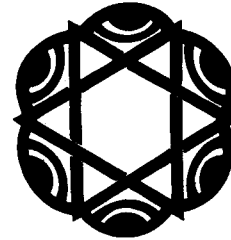
And the texts, of course, consist of words, and part at least of their impact is through the words which they record. Much that in other faiths is expressed through art and music is, in Islam, expressed through the word, giving to verbal communication a unique importance.

This importance was recognised by some of the earliest Arabic classical writers, who speak of poetry and oratory as the two arts which the Arabs most admired and in which they most excelled.¹¹ Both of them are, of course, arts of verbal persuasion; both were extensively used for political purposes. Much classical Arabic poetry was written to be recited in public; much of it consists of eulogy and satire. Many of the poets were employed or retained by rulers and other political personages. Their task was to burnish the image of their patron and tarnish that of his opponents, the one by eulogy, the other by satire.

In earlier times, and perhaps to some extent even today, there was also a magical quality in the blessings lavished on a ruler, and in the imprecations hurled against an enemy. It is surely significant that the Arabic term for satire, *hijā'*, is the etymological cognate of the Hebrew *hagah*, with the meaning, among others, of "weaving spells against someone". In the days before the advent of the media, the poet had an important role in the field of propaganda and of what we nowadays call "public relations", and poetry could often be an important weapon of political warfare. For the modern historian, it is often an invaluable source of information on the language of political discourse, and on the allusions to which the poet knew his listeners would respond. In addition to poetry, we have at our disposal a vast mass of literary and documentary evidence, the former including a wide range of historical and political writings, the latter reflecting many different aspects of both the conduct of government and the waging of political warfare among Muslims from medieval to modern times.

ISLAMIC POLITICAL LANGUAGE, like virtually all forms of language, is full of metaphor, some of it dead, buried, and forgotten, some of it to varying extents alive and conscious. When we use the English word "government", few of us think of its origins in an ancient Greek noun meaning "rudder" and an ancient Greek verb meaning "to steer"; but when we—that is, the verbally less gifted or fastidious among us—speak of the man at the helm steering the ship of state, there is still some faint awareness of a maritime metaphor contained in these words. Similarly, when Muslims use the word *siyāsa*, the Arabic word which, with minor variations, denotes politics in virtually all the languages of the Islamic

world, few of them connect it with an ancient Middle Eastern word meaning "horse", or a classical Arabic verb meaning "to groom" or "train a horse". But when the Ottomans used the horsetail as an emblem of authority, and designated certain high officers of the sultan as "the *Ağas* of the Imperial stirrup", they were clearly evoking the image of the man on the horse as the symbol of effective power.



PROBABLY the commonest metaphors, in Islamic as in Western language, are those which are called spatial, denoting position and direction in space. These are the metaphors with which political relationships, and changes in these relationships, are indicated in terms of up-down, front-back, in-out, near-far. In Islamic as in Western language, "up" and "front" generally indicate greater power, status, or wealth. Movement upward or forward indicates improvement, while movement downwards or backwards indicates deterioration or loss of power, status, etc.

But while Western language, from the earliest times, makes extensive use of up-down and front-back imagery to indicate domination and subordination, early Arabic political language makes very little use of these images. Where they do occur, they are often specific allusions rather than metaphors. Thus, the common use of verbs from the roots *qdm* and *mm*, both with a root meaning of "in front of" or "before", to indicate precedence or authority, derives from leadership in battle or in prayer. In ancient, in contrast to modern, times, both kinds of leadership were necessarily exercised from the front, not from the rear, and the use of these terms thus represents facts on the ground, not metaphors in the mind. Similarly, the use of the term "high" as an adjective qualifying the doors or gates or buildings at the centre of power, as in the famous Ottoman Sublime Porte, refers at least in part to the actual height of buildings which, in earlier times, must have dwarfed all other structures with the exception only of places of worship. The terms "high" and more especially "low" are commonly used to express human status and relationships, but in a social and even moral rather than a political sense. Thus the usual connotation of the Arabic word *safil*, "low", would be something like "vile", "base", "lowborn".

Power relationships are more commonly indicated in Islamic usage by the imagery of near and far, in and out, or—to borrow a social science expression—centre and periphery, and, of course, movement in either direction. Thus, according to an early text, the caliph 'Umar explained his refusal to employ Christians in positions of power in these words:

"I will not honour them when God has degraded them; I

¹¹ According to medieval Egyptian encyclopaedists, the Fatimid caliphs had large numbers of official poets attached to their office of chancery (*dīwān al-inshā'*), including both Sunni poets who refrained from excessive, i.e., heretical, panegyric and Shi'ite poets who indulged in it. The Prophet himself took political poetry very seriously, as can be seen from the fate of poets who attacked him. See W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford, 1956), p. 15; Maxime Rodinson, *Mohammed* (tr., London, 1971), pp. 157-58, 171-72.

will not glorify them when God has humiliated them; I will not bring them near when God has set them far.”¹²

A Western speaker or writer would almost certainly have expressed this idea by saying that he would not raise them up when God had cast them down.

In Persian and Ottoman usage the word “high” (but not “low”) appears more frequently, particularly in titles and in honorific language. Most of this is formulaic, while the discussion of real relationships and changes continues to make much more extensive use of the imagery of near and far, in and out, centre and periphery. Clearly, the centrality of the ruler, and the importance of nearness and access to him, is reflected in this language.¹³

One of the roots most frequently used to connote power and authority—the trilateral *wly*, whence such familiar terms as *vali* and *vilâyet* from Turkey, *mollah* from Iran, and *maulvi* and *maulana* from India—has the primary meaning of “to be near”.¹⁴

BETWEEN the near and the far, there is the middle. And the Arabic word *wasaf*, “middle”, has given rise to a wide range of terms connoting mediation, intermediaries, intercessors, and interventions of various kinds. At the court of Fatimid caliphs of Egypt, the *Wasîf*, or “middleman”, was a high court official, corresponding more or less to the wazir of the ‘Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. Supreme sovereign power is at the centre. The nearer to the centre, the greater the power; the further from the centre, the less the power. In the Ottoman Imperial Palace, the entire complex of buildings was divided into three zones known as “the Inside”, “the In-between”, and “the Outside”. The officers of the In-between (in Turkish *mabeynci*) in large measure controlled access to the seats of power and thereby themselves wielded great power and influence.

Another spatial or orientational metaphor familiar to us from both ancient and modern Western usage is that of revolution or, as it often becomes in practice, movement in circles. This is rare in classical political language. When it occurs, it is usually in the context of cyclical or even astrological explanations of the accession and overthrow of dynasties.

¹² Ibn Qutayba, *‘Uyûn al-Akhbâr*, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1962), p. 43. Cf. a similar usage in an anti-Jewish poem, composed in Granada in the 11th century. The poet, addressing a king whom he accuses of showing undue favour to the Jews, exclaims, “Why should you alone be different and bring them near when in all the land they are kept afar?”

¹³ Maimonides, in his *Guide of the Perplexed* (Arabic *Dalâlat al-Hâ’irîn*), discusses the significance of nearness and remoteness in some detail (I, 10, 18, 20; III, 51).

¹⁴ *Vali* and *vilâyet* are the Turkish pronunciation of the active participle and verbal noun of the Arabic root *w-l-y*, “to be near” and hence “to take charge of”; they mean, respectively, governor and governorship or province. *Mollah* (also *mullah*, *moollah*), comes into English via Urdu and Persian, and derives from the Arabic passive participle *mawlâ*, which among other things means “one to whom clientage is due” and hence, more generally, “patron”, “master”, “protector”. In Iran and India it is commonly applied to men learned

CHANGES IN POWER relationships are indicated by the same metaphors. In Western language, contenders for power may rise or fall. If they rise, it may be as climbers or as rebels, engaged in an uprising. In Islam, verbs meaning “to rise” are commonly used to convey religious, especially mystical, experience, but rarely political ascent. Ambitious Muslims move inward rather than upward; rebellious Muslims secede from, rather than rise against, the existing order. The earliest—indeed the paradigmatic—movement of rebellion against the existing order was that of the *Khawârij*, “those who go out”. Significantly, their movement was expressed as horizontal, not vertical; even more remarkably, it was outward, not inward.

The same concept is expressed in the extensive social and political use of the two verbs *jama’a*, “to gather or join”, and *faraqa*, “to separate or divide”. Gathering is good—hence the *jamā’a*, “the community”, ruled by *ijmā’*, “consensus”. Separation is bad, and gives rise to *firqa*, “sect”, and other forms of disunity. The two notions are combined and contrasted in the prophetic injunction to the Muslim not to separate himself from the community, the *jamā’a*.¹⁵

The language of Right and Left, now universally adopted, is not primarily a spatial or orientational metaphor, but an historical allusion, and derives from the seating arrangements of the French National Assembly after the Revolution, themselves influenced by the seating of government and opposition in the British Parliament. Underlying this there is, of course, a much older metaphor derived from the body in which, by almost universal belief, the Right is good and the Left is somehow ill-omened and suspect.

If we look at the Latin, French, and Anglo-Saxon components of our own English vocabulary, we shall find that while the associations of the Right are dexterity, adroitness, rightness, rightfulness, and even righteousness, those of the Left are somewhat gauche, and can be positively sinister. These terms have their equivalents in many other languages. The classical Arabic *mash’ûm*, “ill-omened”, and the modern Arabic *mutashā’im*, “pessimistic”, are both participial forms of a verb derived from a root meaning “left”, while *yumn*, “good fortune”, and *yamîn*, “oath”, both come from the common Arabic word for “right”. A particularly interesting example is the Russian use of “on the left” for an illicit or black-market transaction. Our own familiar expression

in religion. *Mawlânâ*, “our master”, is used to address divines in the Islamic East and monarchs in the Islamic West.

¹⁵ Two frequently quoted traditions of the Prophet make the point clear: “Whoever removes himself from the [Islamic] Community by a single span, withdraws his neck from the halter of Islam”; and “If anyone dies after being separated from the Community, it is as if he had died in the Time of Ignorance” (i.e., before the advent of Islam).

Another Arabic noun, *hizb*, “party”, is conventionally derived from a verb meaning “to befall”, used of an event, more especially a painful or distressful event. Most probably, *hizb* is a loan-word from Ethiopic. The expression *hizb Allâh*, “the party or adherents of God”, occurs twice in the Qur’ân (V, 61/56; LVIII, 22), in an obviously favourable sense. Most commonly, however, in the Qur’ân and in the early traditional and historical narratives, *hizb* has a rather negative connotation, and is used of a variety of ancient factions. In the early 20th century it became the common Arabic term for political parties in the Western sense.

"right-hand man" is given formal status in such titles as "Wazir of the Right Hand" for the sovereign's senior and most powerful minister.

This older imagery of Right and Left is physiological rather than spatial, and is part of a large group of metaphors derived from the human body. In Islamic as in Western languages, the head in its usual place (on top and in charge) and our references to this organ, both visible and hidden (as in "head", "chief", "capital"), have their Islamic equivalents in the use of the Arabic *ra's* and *ra'is*, the Persian *sar*, and the Turkish *baş*. The use of the term "member", or "limb" (Arabic *ʿaḍw*, Turkish *aza*), to denote an individual forming part of some larger group or assembly is purely modern, and dates from the period of Western influence. The names of the individual limbs or parts of the body, however, figure prominently in Islamic political metaphor. A much-used physiological metaphor is that of the chest or breast, in Arabic *ṣadr*, which in early usage sometimes denotes centrality (e.g., in a building), prominence, leadership, or command, and in later Ottoman usage becomes the formal title of the Grand Vizier.

The terms for forearm (*sā'id*) and upper arm (*ʿaḍud*) appear occasionally to designate helpers or ministers of the ruler, while the words for hand, in Arabic *yad* and in Persian *dast*, are very widely used with a connotation of power, authority, or protection. In legal language, *yad* means "actual possession or control". In other usages, it has a connotation of competence, capability, or active help. The Persian word *dast* appears to have had the sense of "power and authority" from pre-Islamic times. The term *dastūr* or *dastvar* meant "a person exercising authority", whether religious or political, and was later specialised to denote members of the Zoroastrian priesthood. Arabic derivatives include the sense of "rule", "regulation", and, in modern times, "constitution".

The tongue, the foot, and the blood figure in various idioms, while the eye serves two important purposes, the one for spies, the other for notables or prominent persons.

The imagery of birth and rebirth, renaissance and resurrection, so important in Western usage, has no place in classical Islamic times, probably because of its specifically Christian

associations. The great movement of Arab cultural and then political revival in the 19th and 20th centuries, which Westerners have often called the Arab Renaissance, is denoted in Arabic by the word *nahḍa*, from a classical root meaning "to rise to one's feet", in other words from a seated or recumbent position. The political use of the Arabic term *ba'th* and the Persian *rastākhīz*, both with the original theological meaning of "resurrection", dates from the middle years of the present century.

IF MUSLIM political language spurns the themes of birth, death, and resurrection, it does, however, make use of the metaphors of sickness and more particularly of weakness. The Arabic word *da'if*,¹⁶ with the primary meaning of "physically weak", has been used since ancient times to denote those who are socially weak, i.e., in a socially inferior position. A derived participial form, *mustaḍ'af*,¹⁷ "made weak" or "deemed weak", has acquired the meaning of "deprived" or "oppressed", and has been used from medieval times to the present day in revolutionary appeals.

Another common feature in political language is the imagery of youth and age. Muslims in the past seemed to have shared the common belief that age and experience bring wisdom and confer authority. This belief was once universally held; it is now generally abandoned outside the Communist world, and is under attack even there. Examples of this former attitude are not difficult to find. In English, the Latin word for an old man gives us "senator", "senior", and, in a somewhat different vein, "senile". From the equivalent Anglo-Saxon term, we have such words as "elder" and "alderman". The Arabic word *shaykh*, literally "an old man", has become the archetypal term connoting dignity and authority in all the lands of Islam and is widely known in the rest of the world.¹⁸

Youth is quite another matter. In classical times, the social and political connotation of youth was expressed mainly in two forms, one with a connotation of subordination and service, the other of youthful energy and valour. The best-known example of the first is the term *ghulām*, meaning "a

¹⁶ Even in modern Arabic, *da'if* is often linked with *miskīn*, "poor", "wretched", to denote artisans and peasants. In classical usage, it is sometimes used as the converse of *sharīf*, "noble", "well born", and commonly to denote the non-arms-bearing orders of society. Thus, *da'if* sometimes connotes one who lacks *man'a*, i.e., the ability to defend himself against attack, whether with arms, armed retainers, or fortified places. This ability clearly indicates a certain social station, as does also the lack of it.

In a *ḥadīth* frequently cited in political writings, the Prophet is asked by the ascetic Abū Dharr to appoint him to a position of command, and replies:

"You are weak [*da'if*] and this is a trust which, on the Day of Judgment, will bring shame and regret, save only to him who took it rightly and discharged the duties it imposed on him."

The defence of the weak against their oppressors figures prominently in the appeals of Muslim rebels, from early times.

¹⁷ A Qur'anic term, meaning "those who are seen as weak" and hence despised and downtrodden.

"And why should you not fight in the cause of God, and of those

men, women and children who are downtrodden [*mustaḍ'af*], and who cry out: Our Lord, take us out of this city whose people are oppressors, and appoint for us a protector [*walī*] and a helper [*nāsir*] from you."

This passage, which refers to the fate of the Muslims in pagan Mecca, became a proof text for Muslim revolutionaries.

¹⁸ *Shaykh* has many derivatives, denoting various types of authority, and may sometimes be replaced by native words of similar meaning in Persian, Turkish, and other Islamic languages. One such, widely used in the Turkish languages, is *aksakal*, literally "white beard" and contextually usually something like "elder". The Persian word *pīr*, the lexical equivalent of the Arabic *shaykh*, is commonly used in a religious sense, to denote saints, heads of Dervish orders, etc. It does not normally carry a connotation of political seniority or authority. The modern Turkish word for an old man is *ihitiyar*, from an Arabic word meaning "choice"—an interesting example of how metaphor can affect even basic usage. The old men are those who have the right to make decisions, and the capacity to make the right choice—and so choice means "an old man". On modern Arabic usage, see Ami Ayalon, *Language and Change in the Arab Middle East* (1987).

young man”, then “a servant”, and finally a general term for “young male slaves”, particularly those in the service of rulers and governors. The term was also applied to the slave pretorians and other slave troops of these rulers, and thus also acquired a military connotation. Two other terms for a young man, *ḥadath* and *fatā*, have a quite different military connotation, and are applied to the bands of young men, apprentices and others, who formed a kind of militia in the Muslim cities of the Middle Ages. *Futuwwa*, an abstract noun connoting the qualities and characteristics of the *fatā*, is often contrasted with *muruwwa*, the qualities of the grown and mature man. Both terms have a connotation of valour and chivalry. Neither, however, connotes any authority, nor any claim to it.

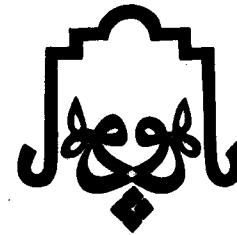
It was not until the 19th and early 20th centuries that such European movements as “Young Germany” and “Young England” evoked their Middle Eastern analogues. The idea that youth constituted a claim to authority was still so alien, and indeed shocking, that even the leaders of these movements seem to have had some difficulty in accepting the term.

The first such movement was a group of Turkish radicals and reformers who flourished in the 1860s. They were known in Europe as “the Young Ottomans”, but in Turkish they called themselves *Yeni Osmanlılar*, or “New Ottomans”. Similar caution affected even the vastly more important “Young Turks” who accomplished the Revolution of 1908. They were known all over Europe as “Young Turks”, and even in Turkey, and in the Turkish language, they called themselves and were called by others *Jön Türk*, with a French (*jeune*) not a Turkish adjective. Even that was used by them only when they were in opposition, and was abandoned once they were in power. Several decades later, political leaders in the Arab and other Islamic countries began to describe themselves as young, with the expectation that they would thereby gain rather than forfeit the respect of the people.

METAPHORS DRAWN from the family, the household, and the dwelling figure prominently in Islamic political language. The notion of the ruler as the father of his country or people, common in the West and expressed in such terms as the Latin “paternal” or the Greek “patriarchal”, is absent in Islam, again probably because of its Christian connotation. The Christian notion of the fatherhood of God, shared in a limited

sense by Judaism, is perceived by Muslims as a blasphemous absurdity; and this rejection seems to have extended to the use of the image of the ruler as father. Only in Turkish does a term meaning “father”, *ata*, acquire a political connotation, and there it is used of an uncle and tutor rather than a father in the strict sense. Among the Turks, though not among the Muslim Arabs, the term *baba*, “father”,¹⁹ is often used as a term of respect for older men, and among the Dervishes is used as a kind of title for Dervish santons and leaders. It has no political connotation. The image of the ruler as mother seems to have been equally abhorrent, and it is probable that the Qur’anic word *umma*, “the people” or “community”, which some have connected with the Arabic *umm*, “mother”, is in fact a loan-word from either Hebrew or Aramaic.²⁰

If, however, the state has no parents, it certainly has children, and terms denoting sons and brothers are in common political use. These may be literal—as for example in indicating membership of a tribe or dynasty—or figurative, indicating a relationship to the state. The term “brother”, with its various equivalents, is in common use for members of the same group, by allegiance as well as by kinship, and in Turkish usage “elder brother”, *ağa*, is a common term of respect for holders of authority. The best-known example is the *abnā*, “sons”, of the ‘Abbasid dynasty, an élite group of slaves and freedmen, both soldiers and civilians, who served the state and thus freed it from dependence on Arab tribal support. This extension of the meaning of “son” was a natural development.



THE MEDIEVAL Muslim family, like that of most of the ancient societies, included slaves as well as kinfolk, and these are regarded in many ways as members of the family. There are many different words for slave in Arabic and other Islamic languages, depending on their functions and their racial origins. “Slave” is commonly used as a metaphor of man’s relation to God. It is rarely if ever used as a metaphor for the subject’s relation to the sovereign. Various words for slave are often used for the agents and employees of the ruler, but these indicate a legal, not a metaphorical, relationship. The Arabic legal and social terms for “master”, the head of the household and owner of the slaves, never underwent the political semantic development of the Greek *despotes* or the Latin *dominus*. Significantly, the best-known Arabic term for “master”, *ṣāḥib*,²¹ has a primary meaning not of “mastery” but of “companionship”. It is the term applied to the companions of the Prophet, the nearest Muslim equivalent to the apostles of Christ; it was sometimes applied, in later times, to the associates and intimates of rulers. Its development into a term of authority, usually dele-

¹⁹ Among Christian Arabs, as among other Christians, priests are called father.

²⁰ Cf. Hebrew *umma*, Aramaic *ummetha*, South Arabian *lumiya*.

²¹ Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases* (2nd ed., rev. 1985). *Ṣāḥib* was used, from early times, for the ruler of a foreign people or country (e.g. *Ṣāḥib al-Rūm* for the Byzantine emperor, *Ṣāḥib al-Zanj* for the leader of the black slaves who revolted in 9th-century Iraq); the commandant of a city, a citadel, a garrison, and more generally, a military force; the governor or independent ruler of a province; the chief of police; the head of a department or an office, especially in government; the person in charge of a task or duty or a service. Under the Buyids, it served as a title of the wazir, and under most dynasties it figures prominently in royal titulature. In British India, it came to be used more particularly as a respectful form of address to Europeans.

gated or subordinate authority, is a striking example of the potency of nearness.

The pastoral image of government, familiar from the Old Testament and much loved by medieval Christian writers on politics, also appears in both classical and early modern Islamic writings. The first major statement on politics, the introduction to *The Book of the Land Tax*, written for the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd by his chief qadi, Abū Yūsuf, develops the theme of the ruler as shepherd at considerable length.

One of the duties of a shepherd is to feed his flock, and the imagery of food—both cooking and eating—was sometimes used to denote the holding of public offices. Servants of the ruler were said to eat or break his bread. A common Ottoman term for the recipient of a government stipend is *vazifehor*, literally job-eater. In the corps of Janissaries, higher and lower officers were called soupmakers and cooks, and the *kazan*—cookpot or kettle—came to be the emblem of the corps' identity and loyalty. When the Janissaries overturned their cookpots and symbolically refused the sultan's food, this was the recognised signal for mutiny.

ANOTHER MAJOR GROUP of metaphors derives from travel. The almost universal religious metaphor of God's path or way, which mankind must follow, is familiar to Muslims from the start. It appears in various forms in the Qur'ān, and is reiterated in the daily prayer. The Holy Law of Islam is poetically designated by the term *sharī'a*, the primary meaning of which is "the way to a watering place". If to follow the way is good, to deviate from it is bad, and a variety of terms denoting misbelievers, propounders of error, and rebels have the primary meaning of "to stray from the right path".²²

While in most Western languages the imagery of travel is maritime, in the Islamic lands it derives from travel by land, and more particularly on horseback. The rider, the horse, the accoutrements, the stirrups, the reins, and even the tail are brought into service as metaphors and sometimes as symbols of authority. Western usage contains two dead metaphors, both derived from the man and his horse—chivalry and management, the one from French *cheval*, "horse", the other, via French, from Italian *maneggio*, "the handling or training of a horse", whence "horsemanship" and "riding school". Both lines of development are present in Islamic political language, in such words as *furūsiyya*, "equitation", "knightliness", "valour", and *siyāsa*, "horse-handling", "statecraft", "politics".

²² For example, *shāhdh*, "deviant", used especially of deviant religious doctrines; *dālāla*, "going astray", hence "false or erroneous belief or practice", and *taḍlīl*, "misleading", "misguidance"; *murūq*, "deviation", hence "disloyalty", "defection", "apostasy", and *māriq*, "astray", hence "renegade" or "heretic"; *zāgha*, "to swerve", hence "to deviate from truth", "to deceive or swindle". Another root, *ghalā*, meaning "to go too far", "to overshoot", is used to convey the notion of excess, of extremism. But *ghālī* (plural *ghulāt*), "extremist", and *ghuluww*, "extremism", are used only of religious movements, and have political significance only in the sense that all

Travel is not undertaken at random, and rarely alone. Starting point, route, and destination provide a number of metaphors. So too—indeed more particularly—do the guides and leaders, and those who follow them. Sometimes the guidance is military, as that of the *qā'id*, "the guide and leader into battle". Sometimes it is perceived as religious, as the guidance of the *murshid*, who leads men into the path of righteousness.²³ A special kind of guidance is that given to the *Mahdī*, "the guided one", a messianic figure who, according to Muslim belief, will be sent and guided by God to end the time of sin and evil-doing, and fill the world with justice and equity.

The metaphoric journey may be undertaken for a variety of purposes—economic, or pasturage, or trade; religious, to a place of pilgrimage; or military, to raid or make war. All these different images appear in the language of power.

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES, the dwelling and its various parts figure prominently in political metaphors. In ancient Arabian literature, the tent and its components—the peg, the pole, the canopy, etc.—serve as metaphors for the ruler, his government, and his supporters. Under the caliphate, the tent was replaced by more sophisticated structures, often denoted by the same words, with the tent-pole becoming a column, the canopy a cupola, and the tent-peg the foundations of the buildings.

By far the commonest of these metaphors, from ancient to modern times, is the use of words denoting the entrance to the building, or some part of it, to represent the government as such. In modern European history, the Sublime Porte is the familiar Ottoman equivalent of Downing Street, the Elysée Palace, the Ballplatz, the Wilhelmstrasse, and more recently the Kremlin and the White House. The Sublime Porte was in fact the entrance to the premises of the Grand Vizier, who conducted the business of government on behalf of the sultan. It is the last example of an elaborate system of metaphors going back to remote Middle Eastern antiquity, in which not only the door or gate but also the lintel, the threshold, the portals, the anteroom, the curtains, and all the other approaches to the seat of power were used to represent the power itself.

In Ottoman chancery usage, this metaphor in various forms becomes a standard formula. Thus, Sultan Murad III, writing to Queen Elizabeth of England in 1583 to acknowledge the receipt of her letter, remarks that:

... your friendship-encompassed letter has ... reached our Splendid Threshold, the Orbit of Felicity, and our

Islamic religious movements have political implications.

²³ The root *rashada* means "to follow the right path", "to be rightly guided", and is thus the converse, figuratively as well as literally, of the various terms denoting deviation and error. It is used especially of God's guidance, i.e., to Islam. Derivatives include *rashid*, "rightly guided" (e.g., in the regnal title of the caliph Hārūn), *murshid*, "guide", *irshād*, "guidance", all of which figure frequently in religio-political language. The passive form, "to be rightly (i.e., divinely) guided" is denoted by the root *hadā*, whence *hudā*, "guidance", and *mahdī*, "the one guided" (by God).

lofty Lintel of Justice, which is the refuge of puissant Sultans and the sanctuary of mighty and revered Khaqans.”

Looked at from below, even the threshold might seem exalted. A petition from an imprisoned dragoman addressed to the Ağa of the Janissaries in about 1769, begins:

“Having bowed my head in submission and rubbed my slavish brow in utter humility and humbleness and complete abjection and supplication to the beneficent dust beneath the feet of the mighty, gracious, condescending, compassionate, merciful, benefactor. . . .”

It then addresses a petition to “the might of the dust of the condescending residence”. The inscription on the outside of the petition reads:

“In the name of almighty God. Petition to the mighty dust beneath the feet of my mighty, gracious, merciful, bounteous, compassionate benefactor, most generous master, now Ağa of the Janissaries of the Lofty Court of the Sublime Porte.”

THIS IMAGERY is, in a sense, an elaboration of the more basic themes of in and out, near and far. In most Muslim courts, there were chamberlains who guarded the points of access to the ruler from the Outside—beyond the door. They are known by such names as the Arabic *ḥājib*, an active participle of a verb meaning “to screen or veil or cover”, or the Persian *pardadār*, “the curtain-holder”.²⁴

Sometimes the metaphors of power are not merely verbal but material, and appear as symbols—as the insignia of authority. In the Islamic lands as elsewhere in the world, the commonest and most widely used of these were weapons. The Prophet himself, we are told, when he first celebrated the two major Muslim festivals, was preceded by one of his followers carrying a spear. During the ceremonies the spear was planted in the ground, and indicated the direction towards which the congregant turned in prayer. The caliph ‘Umar is said to have carried a riding-switch, and most of the early caliphs, as well as their provincial governors, made it a practice to carry a spear or a staff on ceremonial occasions. It became usual even for the preacher, when ascending the pulpit during the Friday service, to hold or lean on a sword, or a staff, or a bow. Both the staff and the pulpit itself had been tokens of authority among the ancient Arabs, and were used by orators and by arbitrators settling disputes. According to ancient custom, in cities which submitted peacefully to the rule of Islam, the preacher carried a staff. In those that were conquered by force, he carried a sword.

²⁴ According to an early Ottoman account of the capture of Constantinople, Sultan Mehmed II, contemplating the captured and ruined city, mused on the transience of worldly power, and uttered these verses:

*The spider is curtain-bearer in the Palace of Chosroes,
The owl sounds the relief in the castle of Afrasiyab.*

Chosroes and Afrasiyab are figures from ancient Iranian history and myth.

This double tradition continued in a modified form in later times. On the one hand, the staff or sword was attenuated to a purely symbolic sceptre, held by the sovereign in person; on the other it was replaced by a symbolic weapon, usually a lance or a mace, carried by a functionary who preceded the ruler in ceremonial public appearances.

In France, the king was proud to be called *le roi soleil*. In the Middle East, the sun was not a beneficent friend but a terrible enemy, and the metaphoric role of the ruler was not as sun but as shadow—providing shade to protect the people under his authority from the merciless sun. According to an early dictum, “The sultan is the shadow of God upon Earth, with whom all creatures seek shelter”. This was materially symbolised by a parasol, carried by a parasol-bearer, who accompanied the sovereign at his public appearances. In later Persian and Turkish usage, the imperial shade (*sāye-i humāyūn*) is a common metonymy for the imperial person and the imperial authority.

Not all the metaphors and symbols of power are as beneficent as pasturage and shade. Sometimes the names of various ferocious beasts and birds of prey are used in royal titlature, and some are even portrayed pictorially. Such, for example are the pictures in early Umayyad palaces, depicting panthers and eagles pouncing on their prey. The implied message was no doubt well understood by those who attended the palace.



THE CROWN and the throne, surely the most familiar emblems and metaphors of royal power in the Christian world, are of limited significance in Islamic political symbolism and discourse, and even that little can be attributed to extraneous, usually Persian influence. Though Muslim historians were acquainted with these insignia as used by the ancient kings, and Muslim artists even portrayed them in miniatures, Muslim sovereigns, in no doubt conscious rejection of pagan trappings of monarchy, began their reigns with neither coronation nor enthronement. The nearest equivalent to any such ritual of accession was the ceremony of the girding of the sword of Osman on a new Ottoman sultan. The symbolism of the sword was familiar from the earliest days of Islam.

In most Muslim dynasties, the crown, in Arabic *tāj*, a loanword from Persian, was a turban studded with jewels; in classical times, the functional, though never the symbolic, equivalent of the throne was the *sarir*, not a high chair but a low couch, on which the sovereign might sit or, more commonly, recline, while holding court. Both were used by provincial governors and other dignitaries, as well as by the sovereign; naturally enough, neither served as a metaphor of

supreme power. Another Arabic term, *'arsh*, which might be more accurately translated as "throne", is used only of God, in a frequently recurring image in the Qur'ān. The *sarīr* is hardly more than a dignified place to sit or recline.²⁵

This contrast between Islamic and Western usage illustrates very clearly the Muslim perception of power relationships in horizontal rather than, as in Christendom, in vertical terms. This is a society which always in principle, and often—at least to some extent—in practice, rejects hierarchy and privilege, a society in which power and status depend primarily on nearness to the ruler and the enjoyment of his favour, rather than on birth or rank.

MOVEMENT INWARD may be beset with difficulties and obstructed by chamberlains and other barriers; but it is incomparably easier than movement upward through the well-defended layers of a stratified society. In this as in much else, Muslim political language reflects the Muslim ideal of social

mobility. The Arab historians tell us that when the caliph al-Mansur, the architect of the 'Abbasid Empire, built his new capital in Baghdad in A.D. 758, "he traced the city plan, making the city round".²⁶ His reason for this, according to the chroniclers, was that "a circular city has advantages over a square city, in that if the monarch were to be in the centre of the square city, some parts would be closer to him than others, while regardless of the divisions, the sections of the Round City are equidistant from him when he is in the centre."²⁷ Nearness is what counts, and justice requires equidistance, at least as a starting point.

The Arab geographers give further reasons for the choice of site. Iraq is the centre of the world, Baghdad is the centre of Iraq, and the caliph's residence is the centre of Baghdad. To emphasise this centrality, the classical authors use a striking metaphor—"the navel of the world".²⁸ A navel presupposes a body, and the body politic is one of the most universal and most enduring of metaphors.

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²⁵ Other terms for throne include Arabic *kursī* and *arika*, Persian *takht* and *dast* (literally "hand"), Turkish *sandali* (literally "made of sandalwood", but cf. *sandalye*, "chair"). In Persian- and Turkish-speaking dynasties the usual term for throne was *takht*, whence *pāy-i takht*, "foot of the throne", the capital city.

In addition to the mace, the sword, the parasol, the crown, and the throne, there are other insignia and rituals of sovereignty, notably the mantle of the Prophet (*burda*), flags and banners, and the ceremonial drums (*nawba*, *ṭablkhāna*). The two most basic tokens of sovereign power in Islamic history are practical and direct, rather than symbols or metaphors. They are the right to be named on the coinage (*sikka*) and in the bidding prayer recited at public worship in the mosques on Friday (*khuṭba*). These were the most universally accepted expressions of independent sovereignty. The omission of a sovereign's name from these two—especially from the *khuṭba*, which has more immedi-

ate impact—was the recognised way of announcing a bid for independence.

²⁶ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1982), p. 238. Al-Ya'qūbī and other Arabic historians and geographers were, however, mistaken in thinking that Baghdad was the first and only round city in the world. The circular plan was familiar in the Middle East since ancient times. See K. A. C. Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture* (1958), pp. 170-173.

²⁷ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād* (Cairo, 1931), p. 72. English translation in Jacob Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages* (1970), p. 52.

²⁸ The image of "the navel of the world" is widely used and appears in Jewish and Indian, as well as Islamic, writings. See A. J. Wensinck, *The Ideas of the Western Semites concerning the Navel of the Earth* (Amsterdam, 1916).

Father and Daughter

Within the staffroom's all but armed stockade
her name was another engraved on all their hearts,
also. "Dawn will drive you up the wall . . .", swing
like an ape, through audacity *ad astra*,
bodying forth the new physics: matter's ultimately

energy, setting the Thames on fire, at Smithfield. "My dad's
a fireman." A big girl at thirteen, to be or not to be

classified "hyperactive" not "maladjusted" as we learnt
in the '70s, mastering terminology, after a fashion

deschooling the old school. She'd struck sparks hoofing
round the Victorian barracks-like room we locked them in
to "teach", then locked them out to stop
them smashing it. Success was half the class there
. . . turning on her, also burned out by her fire-

raising. Then I was playing teacher, bourgeois
professional—until she crashed the aisles
in her class, jumping the desks as her dad jumped the lights.

Val Warner

BOOKS & WRITERS

Between Virtue & Pleasure

Modern Polish Poets—By ADAM CZERNIAWSKI



THE 19th-century Romantic poet, Adam Mickiewicz, originated the idea of Poland as a nation with a momentous role in history. It was essential to tell the citizens of a country which had ceased to exist, in the accepted sense, that it was more truly alive than countries which led a normal existence. In exile in Paris, Mickiewicz published a pamphlet modelled stylistically on the Bible, in which Poland was presented as a modern Christ entombed, awaiting resurrection and a moral and spiritual leadership of the world. The belief in a Messianic destiny—as it came to be known—proved very attractive, and has survived well into the 20th century. The Messianic role is undoubtedly extreme, but it is only one manifestation of inwardly-directed Polish culture and thought, which baffles foreigners.

Ten years ago, however, Bogdan Czaykowski, a Polish poet living in Canada, observed that what he described as countries on “the cultural periphery”, like Poland, were becoming “an active force in modern intellectual life”. “The few major cultural centres” were now ready to take the periphery seriously.¹ But, when *Solidarity* was flourishing in Poland, the poet Zbigniew Herbert commented: “It is very difficult to talk about the situation in Poland in a way that can be universally understood.”² By “the situation in Poland” Herbert did not mean the socio-political upheavals, which after all, were well enough understood throughout the world. He meant Polish literature and its preoccupation with the particularity of Polish history and Polish destiny.

As it happens, Herbert was the first Polish poet to attract considerable attention in the West after the War. His fame

may be due to the cultural realignment which Czaykowski discerns. On the other hand in the 1950s Poland suddenly became the focus of political attention as a country dramatically exposed on the frontier between East and West. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* describes Herbert as a “political poet”. In the context of the East-West confrontation this means that he is a political dissident, proclaiming the agonies of the Polish nation to the world.

The role of national conscience as exemplified by Herbert is impressively outlined in Adam Michnik’s *The History of Honour in Poland* (Institut Littéraire, Paris, 1985). Subtitled *A Prison Reader*, it is dedicated to all those responsible for Michnik’s imprisonment—from General Jaruzelski to the military interrogators and guards. Michnik highlights the influence of several contemporary poets, novelists and thinkers in the formation of Polish moral and political consciousness. To understand the character of the book and the circumstances of its production—and therefore the relationship of art to politics in Poland—one would need to imagine Neil Kinnock, gaoled by Margaret Thatcher, smuggling out a political and ideological treatise based primarily on a reading of the poetry of Philip Larkin.

Herbert’s poetry dominates Michnik’s commentary. To Michnik, at least, Herbert appears like a reincarnation of Mickiewicz—and yet Herbert has succeeded in capturing a large foreign audience in a way that Mickiewicz never did. Mickiewicz had depicted the goings-on, natural and supernatural, in his native Lithuania, then united with Poland. Herbert’s points of reference are European history, mythology, art, thought, religion and culture, with occasional direct or indirect allusions to Polish concerns. Whereas Mickiewicz was primarily Polish, Herbert is primarily cosmopolitan. In Czaykowski’s terminology, it is the periphery that has shifted towards the centre.

HERBERT’S LATEST VOLUME also published in Paris, and now in English translation, is entitled *Report from the Besieged City*.³ As in previous collections, Herbert shows a strong interest in culture and history. While it is true that art provides him with a sense of order and stability, he is never tempted into empty aestheticism. Poles in their Platonic absolutism firmly believe that Beauty and Goodness go together, that

¹ Bogdan Czaykowski, “Poland”, *Modern Poetry in Translation*, No. 23-24 (1975), p. 1.

² Zbigniew Herbert, “Interview”, *Krytyka*, August 1981, p. 52.

³ *Report from the Besieged City and Other Poems*. By ZBIGNIEW HERBERT. Translated by JOHN and BOGDANA CARPENTER. Oxford University Press, £5.95.

great art is produced by virtuous men. In his poem "The Power of Taste", Herbert mischievously plays on this theme to discredit the tawdry ugliness of Communism. (This and all the following translations are my own.)

*No our refusal dissent and obduracy
didn't require great character
we had a pinch of indispensable courage
but basically it was a matter of taste.*

*Yes taste
containing fibres of soul and gristle of conscience.*

*Who knows had they tempted us more cleverly and
beautifully*

*sent pink wafer-thin flat women
or fantastic creatures by Hieronymus Bosch
but in fact what was hell like in those days
a damp ditch murderers' alley a shack
christened the palace of justice
a do-it-yourself Mephisto in a Lenin jacket
despatched missions made up of the Aurora's*

grandchildren

*boys with ashen-grey faces
and very ugly girls with red hands.*

*Indeed their rhetoric was too coarse-grained
(Marcus Tullius was turning in his grave)
chains of tautologies one or two concepts like flails
a torturer's dialectic no elegance in argument
a syntax lacking the charms of the conditional*

*Thus therefore aesthetics may be useful in life
one mustn't neglect the study of beauty
before we join we have scrupulously to examine
the shape of architecture the rhythm of fifes and drums
the official colours and the villainous ritual of funerals*

*Our eyes and ears refused obedience
the princes of our senses chose proud exile*

*No that didn't require great character
we had a pinch of indispensable courage
but basically it was a matter of taste*

*Yes taste
which makes one withdraw squirm or hiss out derision
even if this results in the fall of the body's priceless capital—
its head*

Mischief is indeed a pervasive ingredient of Herbert's poetry. Without it, his idealism and his defence of moral values would sound pompous and wooden. His treatise "Pan Cogito on Virtue" has an air of unseemly levity:

*1.
It's not surprising
virtue is not the bride
of real men*

*generals
strong men
despots*

*they are followed down the ages
by that weepy old maid
in a terrible Salvation Army bonnet
who nags*

*she fetches a portrait of Socrates
from an old lumber-room
a cross kneaded in bread
old words*

*while all around a splendid life roars
pink like an abattoir at dawn*

*one could almost bury her
in a silver casket
of innocent souvenirs*

*she shrinks
like hair in the throat
like a buzz in the ear*

2.

*My god
if only she were a little younger
and prettier*

*marched with the spirit of the times
swung her hips
to the beat of fashionable music*

*perhaps real men would then
fall in love with her
generals strong men despots*

*if only she took more care
looked human
like Liz Taylor
or the Goddess of Victory*

*but she stinks of
mothballs
her lips are sealed
she reiterates the great No*

*insufferably stubborn
comic like a scarecrow
like an anarchist's dream
like the lives of saints*

PART OF HERBERT'S success with Western readers can be ascribed to his affirmation of commonly shared cultural and moral values. The irony is that there has been a persistent complaint in the West over the inexorable disintegration of those same values. So this may be another reason why the periphery deserves more attention from the centre. Such a view has been forcefully expressed by Professor Henry Gifford in his 1985 Clark Lectures.⁴ Noting the low morale among English poets, Gifford is pessimistic about the state of poetry in England. In East European poetry, on the other hand, he observes a vigour and strength which would serve as a model for the West.

Not only Herbert but a dozen or so Polish post-War poets,

⁴ Henry Gifford, *Poetry in a Divided World* (1986).

including a Nobel prize-winner, have had individual collections published in England and America; and many more are represented in anthologies and magazines. The task of translators has been made easier by the formal and stylistic qualities most of these poets share. Gone are the rhetorical flourishes and rhyming pyrotechnics: the change to plain expression, the interest in the conceptual and semantic qualities of language were signalled immediately after the War in the poetry of Tadeusz Różewicz, and it permeates the work of many of those who were to follow him, including Herbert himself. This poetry is capable of instant translation—and instant acceptance all over the world. Perhaps there is now an international style in poetry as there is in architecture.

Its accessibility is improved when these poets avoid altogether—as some certainly do—Polish political and moral traumas. Różewicz has increasingly done so, and a similar evolution may be observed in the work of Wislawa Szymborska. Poland has always been a sexist society, and what now passes there for socialism has probably made things worse. But in literature women have for over a century played an important role. Consequently, they have not been obsessed with feminism—a cause which, however socially desirable, has a constricting effect on literature. Szymborska may occasionally take a feminine viewpoint—in one of her poems Lot's wife speculates on what made her look back towards Sodom and Gomorrah—but she is mercifully free of intense partisanship and self-consciousness. She writes with wit and intellectual passion on topics ranging from terrorism and utopia to art, thought, and “A contribution on Pornography”:

*There is no debauchery worse than thought.
This wantonness is rampant like a wind-blown weed
on a bed reserved for begonias.*

*For those who think, nothing is sacred.
Brazenly calling everything by name,
perverse analyses, meretricious syntheses,
wild and dissolute pursuit of naked facts,
lustful petting of sensitive subjects,
a spawning ground of opinions—that's just what they're
after.*

*On a clear day, under cover of darkness,
They consort in pairs, triangles and rings.
No constraint on age or sex of partners.
Friends corrupt friends.
Degenerate daughters deprave their fathers.
Their eyes gleam, their cheeks glow.
A brother pimps for his younger sister.*

*They prefer the fruit
of the forbidden tree of knowledge
to pink boobs in illustrated mags—
that essentially simple-minded pornography.
The books that divert them have no pictures,
their sole pleasure are special sentences
scored with thumbnail or crayon.*

*In what shocking positions
with what licentious simplicity
mind can impregnate mind!
Positions unknown even to the Kama Sutra.
During these trysts only tea is steaming.
People sit on chairs, move their lips.
Each crosses his own legs.
So one foot touches the floor,
the other swings free.
But occasionally someone gets up
Goes to the window
and through a chink in the curtains
watches the street.*

MANY POETS born at the end of the War became vocal dissidents, their declarative and politically explicit poetry far removed from the hints and ironies of Herbert's work and Szymborska's galactic detachment. Among those younger still, Bronislaw Maj is remarkable because the political note is once again muted—although he is stamped as a dissident: as late as 1984 *Solidarity* distinguished him with an honorary prize and his latest collection has been published in London rather than Warsaw.⁵

The first impression of Maj's poetry is one of great delicacy, gentleness and inwardness. “My imagination is particular”, he declares, proclaiming his ideal poem to be “as brief as the life of a cabbage white”. Observing a falling leaf proves a sufficient image for a poem concerned with the recording of a single moment which, but for the poet's presence, would have passed unnoticed and is in itself significant only because it inspires this (untitled) poem:

*A leaf, one of the last, broke off a maple branch,
it swirls in clear October air, falls
on a pile of other leaves, grows dark and still. No one
admired its rousing battle with the wind,
no one followed its flight, no one will distinguish it now
lying among other leaves, no one had seen
what I had, no one. I am
alone.*

But one soon realises that one needs to listen more seriously to this quiet voice:

*For years, day after day, breathing lies, we had lost
the distinction between good and evil.*

Maj, like Herbert and so many other Polish poets, turns out to be a moralist. He confesses that he “lied to preserve truth” and tried to achieve incompatible objectives. “To survive and be clean” is a particularly acute moral problem for a writer in a country where the state tempts him with rich rewards for conformity.

Maj's metaphysical longing to preserve the passing moment, his preference for minimal description and his concern over the state of the Polish nation come together in a remarkable poem which records how a man burned himself to death. It required a poet to take seriously and record this immolation, this sacrificial act of defiance against Poland's

⁵ Bronislaw Maj, *The Destruction of the Holy City* (Puls Publications, 1986).

social and economic disintegration. The protest took place in Krakow, the repository of Polish culture, learning and tradition, which is itself crumbling away in the current economic disaster and whose citizens have grown apathetic and meanminded. He ends his untitled poem with the words of Cyprian Norwid, quoting from a work in which the 19th-century poet and moralist speculates whether a purging sacrificial fire will reduce everything to ashes and chaos or whether the fire will forge a beautiful diamond.

*This lasts barely a few minutes: the largest marketplace in
old
Europe, a misty morning, the city's voices are still uncertain
—then:
a fire, blindingly yellow, terrifies and disables them: they
stop dealing
in dollars and vodka in the bank's doorways, trembling
circles
of the crowd converge on a man who burns chained to a
hydrant. The reek of petrol,
swiftly: his clothes, then his hair, shaking hands and lips: a
voice
distorted in pain is only a cry, will not
succeed as words, the dark acrid smoke of the rejected
sacrifice doesn't rise*

⁶ Maurice Bowra, "Rainer Maria Rilke", in *The Heritage of Symbolism* (1951).

*to heaven, will not freeze into a sign: it crawls low, vanishes
absorbed in the hungry lungs of the crowd, which—only
some
minutes later—will choose life; in the doorways opposite
they are
again dealing in dollars and vodka, calm circles
of the crowd disperse, the last flame of old Europe
dies away and the city's triumphal voice
sets: "Burning, how can you tell
whether you are waxing free or
whether what is yours is doomed
to destruction."*

Half a century ago, Maurice Bowra, whose catholic taste in poetry extended from Pindar to Akhmatova, published an essay in which he observed that:

"The peculiar French genius has been to find forms which suit the mass of civilised men and are in no sense local or provincial. To this rule Symbolism was no exception. In its denial of politics and its cult of the Beautiful it was essentially international."⁶

Perhaps it is the genius of Polish poetry in our time that it has found forms which suit the mass of civilised men by combining an acceptance of politics with the now unorthodox cult of the Beautiful.

Our Mothers, Our Selves

On D. W. Winnicott—By DINAH M. MENDES



THE EMINENT British psychoanalyst who signed himself D. W. Winnicott died in 1971, but the Winnicott Trust and Publications Committee continues to make available previously uncollected papers and unpublished work. *Home Is Where We Start From: Essays by a Psychoanalyst*¹ is an excellent introduction to Winnicott for the uninitiated, as well as an entertain-

ing overview for those who know his work. This posthumous collection of essays and talks presents Winnicott in a nutshell, with pieces on creative living, the false self, the value of depression in everyday life, and the element of hope in delinquency. In the section entitled "Reflections on Society", Winnicott applies psychoanalytic concepts to such issues as feminism, the birth-control pill, the Berlin Wall, and the significance of the monarchy in Great Britain. Extension of

psychoanalytic theory to non-clinical topics can often seem forced or laboured, but these essays have an effortless and graceful quality, even as one senses the author's abiding commitment to the universality of psychoanalytic insight. With a felicitous balance of conviction and playfulness, communicating in familiar and even homey prose, Winnicott might win over the most resistant and sceptical of audiences.

The other two volumes published since 1986, *Holding and Interpretation: Fragment of an Analysis*² and *The Spontaneous Gesture: Selected Letters of D. W. Winnicott*³ are collection pieces for the Winnicott buff. The letters provide a more personal glimpse of a man who always expressed himself very personally. One can read about Winnicott's self-confessed need to reformulate all ideas in his own terms,

¹ *Home Is Where We Start From: Essays by a Psychoanalyst*. By D. W. WINNICOTT. Edited by CLARE WINNICOTT. W. W. Norton, \$18.95; Penguin, £4.95.

² *Holding and Interpretation: Fragment of an Analysis*. By D. W. WINNICOTT. Introduction by MASUD R. KHAN. Grove Press, \$18.95; Hogarth Press, £15.00.

³ *The Spontaneous Gesture: Selected Letters of D. W. Winnicott*. Edited by F. ROBERT RODMAN. Harvard University Press, \$20.00, £16.95.

and about his “claustrophobic” reaction to rigid systems and principles. The evolution of the conflict between Winnicott’s admiration for Melanie Klein’s genius and his rebellion against the Klein group’s penchant for absolute pronouncements and dogma is laid out in epistolary form. In a 1952 letter to Melanie Klein he criticised the “need to have everything that is new restated in your own terms”, at the same time reassuring her: “I have no difficulty whatever in telling anyone who asks me, from the bottom of my heart, that you are the best analyst as well as the most creative in the analytic movement.” In a 1966 letter to Donald Meltzer he voiced his protest against Klein’s alleged disregard for the environmental factor in development more confidently and stridently:

“I am longing for the day when one of the Kleinian group will be able to say that the dependability of the internal mother has a history in the actual dependability at the beginning, but Melanie Klein would not allow this. She would only say: ‘Of course I have always said that environment is important’—and imply thereby that she would be giving away something vital if she were to say what I have just put down in words.”

Holding and Interpretation, lovingly introduced by Winnicott’s disciple, Masud R. Khan, is a verbatim transcript of a significant portion of an analysis conducted by Winnicott, offering an *in vivo* illustration of the clinical application of his well-known concepts of the true and false self, the holding environment or the need to adapt to the needs of infants and mentally ill children and adults, and the importance of spontaneity and creativity in healthy living. Winnicott was fond of paradox and the apparent contradiction—a taste that characterises his thinking, his sensibility, and his communication, and complicates an assessment of his work. At times he conveyed complex psychological processes in remarkably lucid and accessible language; at other times his ideas resonated with poetic or intuitive inspiration, but were ultimately elusive and difficult to translate.

Innumerable paediatric consultations and observations of mothers and infants were the empirical matrix of Winnicott’s ideas. “There is no such thing as a baby”, he declared, meaning that a baby cannot be observed alone, or outside the human environment on which it is wholly dependent for survival. This statement may seem obvious now, but at the time it represented a bold attempt to counter the direction of British psychoanalytic theorising. Melanie Klein and her followers concentrated almost exclusively on psychic development of the infant and child in terms of its fantasies about reality, which were considered to be largely influenced by constitutionally determined aggression and envy.

THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE and writings Winnicott acknowledged the originality and centrality of Klein’s ideas. His thinking on “the phase of concern” owed everything to her concept of the significance of the depressive position in normal development. This pivotal construct, which Winnicott regarded as equivalent in significance to Freud’s

elucidation of the oedipal conflict, describes the developmental stage at which the child becomes aware that the object (usually the mother as the original object) of his loving feelings is the same as the object of his hateful feelings. Gradually acquired tolerance for painfully contradictory states leads to a healthy capacity for guilt—by which is meant concern and remorse for the damage inflicted in fantasy on the loved object—and a wish to repair the damage by a reparative act of love and generosity. According to Klein, this resolution was the psychological source of all productivity and creativity.

Illuminating as Klein was in her description of the internal conflicts and fantasies of child development, Winnicott could not accept her obliviousness to the environmental context of the infant and child. It was another manifestation of the time-honoured argument over Nature versus Nurture—and there are no doubt many psychoanalysts who would contend that Winnicott ignored hereditary and constitutional predispositions and their impact on the environment. Whether or not one agrees with the importance that Winnicott accords the environment, the detail and richness of his exposition of the interaction between mother and infant are an achievement in themselves. To follow Winnicott as he describes mother and infant together is to gaze through a high-powered lens which reveals that the seemingly humdrum routines of infant care, such as feeding, changing, and holding, contain complex and subtle messages to the baby about itself and its environment.

Winnicott bridges the observable, external environment and the burgeoning internal world of the infant by demonstrating the inseparable links between maternal physical ministrations, a mother’s intuition of her baby’s needs, and the psychological outgrowths of her support and adaptation. “Primary maternal preoccupation” describes the emotional state of late pregnancy and the early post-partum period, in which the mother’s potential capacity to identify with her infant is heightened as she prepares to “hold” her particular infant. For Winnicott, “holding” does not simply connote the physical provision of security and comfort, but the mother’s ability to have in her mind a picture of her infant as a whole, integrated in a way that it could not possibly achieve at the time, and to reflect this back to it.

The development of personal authenticity and creativity depends on the mother’s response to the infant’s spontaneous gestures, which gives it the omnipotent illusion of creating its world. The ordinary intuitive mother knows better than to challenge the infant about the origin of this new-found world, whether it is a creation from within or a recognition of what already exists without. Her initial near-complete adaptation to the infant, with a gradual lessening of perfect attunement, is crucial to the infant psyche. The mother is presented with a core of a self, one which she must protect against external impacts that might disrupt the infant’s experience of continuity or awaken it to an overwhelming sense of powerlessness. Her intuitive mediations and unintrusive facilitation buffer the infant against stimuli that it cannot yet incorporate, and enable it to feel vital and powerful in creating a world, instead of vulnerable and helpless. Awesome as these achievements sound, Winnicott maintained that they were the essence of ordinary, “good enough” mothering, performed naturally and intuitively by the majority of mothers.

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ENDORSEMENT OF THE ART of motherhood may invite problems in a post-feminist age, but to submerge oneself in Winnicott is to emerge with a heightened appreciation for this undervalued, yet most primary and civilising job. In several articles, he refers to the fear and suspicion that are a legacy of the original and unacknowledged dependence of every human being on a woman. His fascination with the psychological tasks of motherhood was undoubtedly linked to his extraordinary sensibility and capacity for cross-identification. An ability to identify with both maternal and infant needs sets him apart from other psychoanalytic theorists, women as well as men, since he dares to adopt a viewpoint that is neither powerful nor traditionally masculine; he might be considered a true feminist, if by that is implied one who realistically and unsentimentally values the female contribution to life.

This capacity for maternal identification did far more than enliven his clinical aperception and method. Winnicott discerned the threats to the natural intuition with which most healthy women approached motherhood. In many public talks and broadcasts he encouraged women to rely on their instinctive judgments as mothers, and not be intimidated by the dictates of medical and educational authorities, especially when they seemed to contradict that intuition. He advocated better-informed social and governmental support for the “ordinary devoted” home—father supporting mother in her care of the children—as the most potent safeguard against mental illness and delinquency, an investment in a thriving society: “Rather than be compelled to hold an ill child or adult who is anti-social, how much better to ‘hold’ an infant well at the beginning” (*The Child, The Family, and The Outside World*). Winnicott emphasised that delinquency or anti-social behaviour was a response to deprivation, meaning a deterioration in a home environment that had once been experienced as good or adequate. The larger society, in his view, could only reflect the infinite families of which it was composed.

Winnicott’s clinical constructs and psychotherapeutic strategies are modelled on his formulation of the vicissitudes of the infant-mother relationship in health and in sickness. Freud’s structural conflict model of mental illness was crucial to the understanding and psychotherapy of psychoneurotic patients, whose problems did not stem from failures in the two-person or mother-infant relationship. Work with borderline and psychotic patients, however, was based on the essential recognition that for them the fundamental and initial communication process between mother and infant had been severely distorted. Winnicott defined his therapeutic goal as facilitation of the emergence of the innate core of the patient’s self, the true self, that had retreated many years earlier behind the armour of the false self when the early environment proved too threatening.

Although the false self was characterised by a conviction of futility related to its sense of unreality, it did enable the patient to maintain contact, however artificial, with the external world. It was the false self that brought the patient in for treatment, as a nurse would a sick child. In optimal circumstances, the withdrawal so typical of this kind of patient, who feels that he is actually holding the self, is recognised by the

analyst, who can then take over the holding from the patient. This allows the patient’s withdrawal to become transformed into a regression to the dependency state of infancy. Regression contains the germ of therapeutic cure, because the true self has re-emerged in its state of original need. Unlike the classical analyst, who interprets wishes, the therapist of the borderline and psychotic patient must acknowledge these needs as legitimate and inexorable, thus correcting the original environmental failure of adaptation. In general, Winnicott’s severely ill patients were not given a standard psychiatric diagnosis, but were described in terms of their false self armour and their potential for regression.

As he developed his ideas on mental illness and health, Winnicott became increasingly interested in conveying the qualities and experience of the self—an experiential rather than a structural-anatomical mode of analysis. Although Heinz Kohut, theorist of the modern and influential self psychology school, has never directly acknowledged Winnicott’s contributions, his theoretical and clinical focus on the subjective experience of self and his treatment of the disorders of the self are closely related to Winnicott’s ideas.

THE INFANT-MOTHER relationship was the springboard for all Winnicott’s far-reaching ideas. The origins of cultural experience—art and religion—and of creativity could be traced, he believed, to aspects of the first relationship. Healthy people do not simply react to the world around them, as if to a sequence of inescapable phenomena, but contribute something of their essence to the experience. Winnicott’s captivating metaphysical speculations on the origins of creativity and the locus of cultural exchange stem from his perception of the significance of the infant’s “transitional object”, the baby’s beloved blanket or toy from which, over a period of time, he is inseparable.

Remarkable meaning was imparted to this unprepossessing object, because it marked the point of the child’s dawning recognition of the separation between the “me” and the “not me”. Prior to this the infant, supported by the augmenting ego of its mother, does not distinguish between mother and self, between external and internal. At the time when the child begins to realise a separateness from mother, and therefore its smallness and vulnerability, the transitional object which occupies a transitional position between internal fantasy and external reality is a truly ego-saving device. The ordinary devoted mother does not fail the child by questioning the equivocal status of this object (created or found), and thus protects the child’s capacity for illusion.

From consideration of the meaning of the transitional object—a widely accepted and admired concept—Winnicott moved on to speculate on the significance of the transitional area, an intermediate area of experience and communication, neither completely personal and internal, nor completely external. This is the arena of creative play in childhood, of creative endeavour in general, and of religious and aesthetic experience. Provocative and profound as these ideas are, they have an abstruse, *insaisissable* quality that resists purely rational analysis. They must be absorbed poetically and intuitively, or not at all.

EVALUATION OF Winnicott's legacy poses a challenge. For one thing, there are many Winnicotts. There is the Winnicott who evolved a theory of the psychological meaning and fate of the infant/child's relationship with the mother, and hence the development of an authentic, vital self in health, or a false and constricted self when psychopathology predominates. There is the social activist and advocate, who advised on the importance of support for women plying their natural skills as mothers, and who explained sociopathy in terms of environmental deprivation. There is also the philosopher who speculated on sources of creativity, the significance of illusion in response to art and religion, and the nature of reality (or the several spheres of reality).

It is difficult to compare Winnicott to other psychoanalytic theorists, because he neither organised his ideas into a formal system nor concerned himself with metapsychology. Although he delineated in compelling detail the psychological functions of the infant-mother relationship and their effect on the development of a healthy self, he never explained the metamorphosis of these experiences into psychic structures such as particular ego functions or characteristics. This is a significant gap; other theorists of comparable status have attempted to fit their ideas into an existing metapsychology, have suggested modifications or, like Kohut, have reworked metapsychology entirely. It is likely that Winnicott's intense dislike of doctrine, of formulations that demand the reader's mental compliance, precluded such an attempt. In his writing one does not sense a wish to assert intellectual dominance, but rather a need to communicate the fruits of creative thought; and he may never have felt the temptation to establish a system. Winnicott was conscious both of his uniqueness and of his indebtedness to the foundation laid by others. In *Playing and Reality* he wrote that "in any cultural field it is not possible to be original except on a basis of tradition"; Freud and Melanie Klein, giants in the field, had prepared the groundwork which he was enriching and refining.

WINNICOTT'S insistence on being himself, on the expression of his "Winnicottness" again sets him apart from other theorists. It is not difficult to imagine that he may have irked some of the staid members of the British Psychoanalytic Society by his refusal to speak in the common tongue of psychoanalysis, and his need to rethink all ideas and express them in his own way. In a letter to the psychoanalyst David Rapaport (reprinted in *The Spontaneous Gesture*), Winnicott confessed:

"I am one of those people who feel compelled to work in my own way and to express myself in my own language first; by a struggle I sometimes come around to rewording what I am saying to bring it in line with other work, in which case I usually find that my own 'original' ideas were not so original as I had to think they were when they were emerging."

An intriguing personal glimpse, given Winnicott's emphasis on individual and creative discovery of the world. With that personal consolidation of style and thought, Winnicott's impact on patients and students must have been very distinct. In

an afterword to *The Piggle* (1978), a posthumously published account of his treatment of a two-and-a-half-year-old girl, her parents suggest that their daughter's independence of mind and capacity to identify with a wide range of people may reflect the residue or after-effect of her early encounters with him.

Occasionally, the effect produced by reading Winnicott is like coming across hypotheses expressed in poetry. He is both social scientist and poet, and his thoughts can move imperceptibly from rational and tangible reference points to the shifting borders of intuitively grasped truths. Nowhere is this more evident than in his volume *Playing and Reality* (1971) in which he advances from the concept of the transitional object to the transitional area of culture and creativity. Winnicott embodied his own ideas to an unusual degree; one of his many gifts seems to have been the capacity to bridge his personal reality and the area of shared reality, where the reader or listener's impressions and experiences blend with his own in a moment of understanding. To engage oneself in Winnicott's thinking is to resonate with him, to respond as to an artistic creation. But this type of response can vary according to the mood and receptivity of the audience, a factor which further contributes to the subjectivity of any evaluation.

THE CONCEPT of the transitional object endures as Winnicott's most popularly recognised and regarded contribution, whereas his ideas on the transitional area—the sphere of play, creativity and culture—have a metaphysical aura that is alien to psychoanalytic thinking and therefore difficult to incorporate. Winnicott's emphasis on the experience of healthy and creative living is unique in a speciality which usually emphasises unhealthy adaptation. His ultimate focus on the self—in its vitality or futility, spontaneity or artificiality, creativity or compliance—offers the immediacy of existential identification, and previews Kohut's self psychology. From an historical point of view, Winnicott extended Klein's ideas on infantile fantasy and psychic development to the actual relationship between infant and mother. He came to be regarded as an environmentalist in his growing conviction about the importance of the human environment in enhancing or hindering the expression of the infant's innate maturational potential. Today, his definition of psychosis as a "deficiency

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disease" and his linkage of sociopathy with environmental deprivation might well be rejected by many workers in the field, who would cite the accumulating evidence of hereditary and biological determinants. The relative importance of Nature versus Nurture will continue to be argued, but Winnicott has enlightened us about the importance of maternal attunement, empathy, and intuitive facilitation in child development.

Winnicott extended his uncanny capacity for identification to those without a "voice" in society: infants and children, mothers, the psychologically handicapped, and delinquents. In the essay "Freedom", in *Home Is Where We Start From*, he contends that the most significant class of have-nots in society are those whose families have not provided them with

an adequate psychological launching in childhood, and who must struggle throughout their life with the consequences. Winnicott was an optimist. He maintained his steady belief that a good home environment can enable a child to master its destructive instincts, fulfil its potential, and live a vital, productive life.

We cannot alter the genes that determine the biological and constitutional givens of each individual. What we can affect is the human environment that meets each child; understanding and modification of environmental factors that promote or impede the unfolding of the self remain the most important means of influence in child development. Winnicott's intuitions and discoveries offer practical guidance and inspiration at the humblest and deepest level—at home.

Infinite Variety

Peggy Ashcroft & Ellen Terry—By ELIZABETH JENNINGS



WHAT IS IT that gives us a passion for the stage? Every child wants to act at some time or other. This is usually an extension of the imaginative life of childhood. All dreams can come true, all lives be entered, all characters become one's own.

As a child, I loved my toy theatres and also the play I wrote in collaboration with a friend when we were both very young. Of course we wrote ourselves star parts (mine was largely in blank verse). But the wish to act, which often continues into late adolescence, does not spring from the same source as the desire to be an audience, which is in part a very adult longing to enter characters and lives which can never be our own; a desire for the magical, even the mystical. In this sense, a love of the theatre is a wish to leave oneself behind.

An age in which so many people are obsessed and eroded by seeking their identities, finding out who they are, needs the theatre more than ever—and gets it, as we find especially in the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre today. The selfish pursuit of one's own personality is forgotten when the footlights glow and the curtain rises. The magic will never fail, because we need it in order to understand not only ourselves but also the age, place, and space in which we live. Most of us swiftly discover that the search for identity for its own sake is pointless. When we enter a theatre we throw off the armour-plate of self while the actors are putting on their costumes and making up their faces.

The theatre is only therapeutic, as it were, by accident. Its

true role is to extend our knowledge of human experience. And it demands something of us; it invites our response and—at its best—our rapport. Live theatre has never been imperilled by the cinema, television, or video. We go out to it; we are active; the actors need us. John Gielgud, acting *Hamlet* to the troops during the last War, said he found it very exciting—his audience had no idea what was going to happen next, and were literally on the edge of their seats.

WE ARE FORTUNATE to be living in a period when the British theatre is especially rich, with exciting playwrights, gifted directors, and fine performers of every age, including great names such as Alec Guinness (in his seventies), and, a decade older, John Gielgud and Peggy Ashcroft. *Ashcroft*, by Robert Tanitch,¹ a book of wonderful photographs and (usually) brief tributes from admirers from Peggy Ashcroft's own profession, is designed to celebrate her scarcely credible eightieth birthday last December. John Gielgud speaks for theatre-lovers when he opens his contribution with the words:

"What can I say that will not seem fulsome? Consummate actress, darling friend, impeccable partner and colleague . . . unspoiled by her recent fame on the screen and television, the same enchanting personality she has always been in the sixty-odd years I have known and cherished her."

Ashcroft and Gielgud have acted together many times over the years. I have been fortunate to see them as Hamlet and Ophelia, Lear and Cordelia, and Benedick and Beatrice. Both have recently won Oscars; and both still move and speak like young people, though neither has ever strained to seem young. Peggy Ashcroft has been acting since she was in her teens; she retains the magic of youth partly because she is always ready to try something new, and does not care if she plays a plain or even mad woman. A supporter of great

¹ *Ashcroft*. By ROBERT TANITCH. Hutchinson, £16.95.

causes, passionate in her hatred of injustice, prejudice, materialism, or stubborn stupidity, she possesses that vitality which often accompanies genius.

What is it that shapes a great performer or a star? Dedication, beauty, integrity and charm—all these help, yet star quality remains an elusive phenomenon; we recognise it, but find it hard to capture in a definition. Perhaps it can be said that a good actor is one we love to see acting, while great actors hold our attention whatever they may be doing.

Robert Tanitch's book moves from the 1920s to the decade of the '80s. Through all these periods Peggy Ashcroft, always devoted to teamwork on the stage, has grown more and more versatile and adaptable. There is scarcely a good living or dead playwright whose work her artistry has not adorned. One of our greatest Shakespearean performers of either sex, she has also appeared in plays by Chekhov, Brecht, Beckett, Pinter, and countless others.

In acting, it has been said, technique, imagination, and character play almost equal parts. Even when a performer of Peggy Ashcroft's calibre plays unsympathetic or ill-favoured women, her nature, her essential goodness, shines through. Compassion and insight into the various manifestations of human life have undoubtedly contributed to the absolute

authenticity of the roles she plays, whether a light-hearted, witty Beatrice or a woman tormented by physical passion like the main character in Terence Rattigan's *The Deep Blue Sea*.

Peggy Ashcroft has never sought applause, never hugged the limelight. In this age of interviews she shuns the interview, and has scarcely given any to either Press or television. She is clearly deeply loved as well as greatly admired. Performers from Alec Guinness to Judi Dench make this very clear in their contributions to the book. Perhaps the most interesting is Peter Hall's. He has often directed her, and he commends her selflessness, her devotion to her art, and her seamless generosity.

It is hard to believe that when John Gielgud's great-aunt started her theatrical career at the age of nine, the stage was considered "a place of raffish disrepute". Her biographer, Nina Auerbach, in *Ellen Terry: A Player in Her Time*² gives us a complete and enthralling account of the long career from the child who played boys' parts in such plays as *The Winter's Tale* to the beautiful, sensitive, highly intelligent woman who so often partnered the tyrannical Henry Irving. If the stage was considered little more than a rather amusing human circus at the outset of her career in the mid-19th century, it had certainly, when she was older, become a place where the great in all walks of life were constant visitors.

Ellen Terry was more volatile and moody than Peggy Ashcroft, and this must certainly be due in large part to the kind of theatre in which she had to work. She was a woman of

² *Ellen Terry: A Player in Her Time*. By NINA AUERBACH. Phoenix House, £17.50.

'...What Gorbachev is up against is not only the heritage of Stalinism and the ensuing demoralisation of society, but also that sense of apathy, that lack of individual initiative, ambition, civil courage, punctuality and pride in workmanship which have constituted the traditional impediments of Russian civilisation.'

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enormous charm, strong will, and high intelligence: her letters, some of which have never been quoted before, bear witness to a complex, passionate, dedicated, sometimes formidable character. Shakespeare was, Nina Auerbach tells us, "her all-inclusive divinity"—and she lectured on his work in her later years.

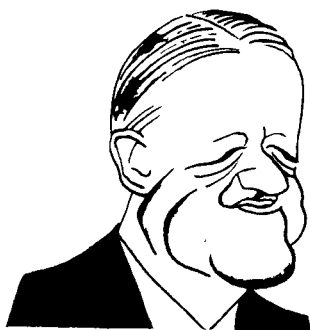
Through her early marriage to the painter G. F. Watts she was, we are told, "educated . . . into adulthood": this odd but most revealing relationship fostered her creative genius. Her emotional life was never easy, however; the liaison with George Godwin, to whom she bore two children, began as an idyll but could not remain one. Her life was almost tempestuously rich. She had great vitality (a gift passed down to her great-nephew), and entranced her audiences by the intuitive

and emotional force of her Shakespearean acting; she also found time to conduct a lively correspondence with, among others, George Bernard Shaw. This sympathetic and perceptive book vividly communicates Ellen Terry's physical beauty and emotional rapture.

Would life have been easier for Ellen Terry if she had lived in Peggy Ashcroft's time? There would certainly have been less conflict. Peggy Ashcroft is dynamic on the stage, Ellen Terry was equally so in her life. The sweetness and total dedication of her character can be seen today in the energy, passion and genius of John Gielgud. How fortunate that Peggy Ashcroft and he (now on the stage again at the age of 83) are still so vitally with us and give us cause for so much gratitude and wonder.

Cross-Bench Biographies

Butler & Baldwin—By MAX BELOFF



THOSE WHO DO NOT reach "the top of the greasy pole" (Disraeli's still apposite phrase) are on the whole more interesting than those who do. Certainly they present a greater challenge to the biographer, who has to ask himself in R. A. Butler's case why he twice appeared to be thwarted at the last moment in his laudable and understand-

able desire to be Prime Minister. Perhaps Butler's curiously enigmatic personality was responsible for his final piece of mockery at the expense of the Party that would not have him as leader—the choice as his official biographer of a distinguished journalist whose political associations have always been with the Labour Party. It has in fact been a fortunate choice: Anthony Howard has written an admirable book, scrupulously careful in its treatment of the evidence and at the same time intensely readable.¹

Yet it remains odd, as though Disraeli had chosen John Morley. After all, Rab Butler is likely to be best remembered for the Butler Education Act of 1944—the most important legislative achievement of a wartime coalition largely occupied with graver matters. Indeed, it is now the habit of opponents of the current Tory restructuring of the education system to call attention to the superior merits of the consensus achieved in the Butler Act. But as Butler himself wrote in

his own brief memoirs, it was already clear that in many respects it had not been carried into effect. And among the reasons he gave was that "the future of the grammar schools had been turned into a political football through the obsessive insistence of the Labour Party on a doctrinal rather than an empirical approach to composite or comprehensive schemes of secondary education".² Why then should someone whose political religion was empiricism choose a member of a party whose essence is doctrinal? Yet it is fair to add that Mr Howard's treatment of the making and passage of the Butler Act is both convincing and illuminating.

Nor does Mr Howard attempt to make party points in his investigation of Butler's career within the Conservative Party, which began under what appeared the favourable auspices conferred by the patronage of Neville Chamberlain, Samuel Hoare, and above all Stanley Baldwin. Baldwin was his exemplar, as Butler proclaimed, and it was in Baldwin's spirit that he tried to reanimate the Conservative Party after the 1945 débâcle.

NONE OF RAB'S PATRONS were names to conjure with by then, since it was Churchill (who after all only reached "the top of the greasy pole" with the aid of Hitler) who dominated the Conservative Party after 1940. For Churchill and his more immediate circle, Butler was the man who had assisted Hoare with the parliamentary passage of the 1935 India Act—an unforgiven blow to the only part of the imperial vision Churchill really cared about. For a wider circle, Butler's under-secretaryship at the Foreign Office meant that he had to take a share of the blame for Neville Chamberlain's version of "Appeasement". And, as has been known for some time, Butler took part in the secret talks through Swedish intermediaries by which Halifax continued his exploration of a

¹ *RAB: The Life of R. A. Butler*. By ANTHONY HOWARD. Jonathan Cape, £15.00.

² *The Art of the Possible. The Memoirs of Lord Butler* (1971), p. 124.

possible compromise peace even after Churchill came into power.³ As Mr Howard remarks, "it was of course unfortunate that sentiments smacking more of defeatism than defiance should have fallen from the lips of a junior Minister on the very day France surrendered to Germany". But Butler himself—whose "half-offer" of resignation (which Halifax did not, seemingly, pass on to Churchill) is printed by Mr Howard in full—clearly agreed that he had been unwary, though denying the defeatist implications of his conversation with the Swedish Minister.

The Baldwin imprint is more obvious in Butler's role in Opposition between 1945 and 1951. But it was Churchill, despite all that had passed, who gave him his opportunity, by making him chairman of the then almost moribund Conservative Research Department which he transformed into an intellectual power-house for the only time in its history, largely through his shrewdness in recruiting able adjutants but also by securing his political base through insisting on the right to direct access to the leader. The acceptance of the "Industrial Charter" by the Party Conference in 1947 owed little, as Mr Howard shows, to active support from Churchill, but much to the two rising luminaries, Butler and Harold Macmillan; though it must be added that Butler, in rivalry with Macmillan not for the first or last time, showed some agility in preventing Macmillan from claiming all the credit by getting in first with the Charter's main contents.

THE CHOICE OF Butler as Chancellor of the Exchequer when Churchill returned to power in October 1951—made possible by Oliver Stanley's premature death—was the climax of his upward moves through the Party hierarchy, putting him second only to Churchill's obvious heir apparent, Anthony Eden.

While Eden had supported the Industrial Charter and was not in domestic matters very remote from Butler's general liberal Toryism, he clearly wished to make a mark on his own administration and for that required a Chancellor of his own choice. The reshaping of the Cabinet was, however, spread out over a long period and the change in the Chancellorship to which Macmillan was appointed did not come until December 1955. As Robert Rhodes James, Eden's most recent biographer, points out, the change was unfortunate. Macmillan, who had succeeded Eden as Foreign Secretary in May, regarded it as a demotion, and Butler, who accepted the position of Leader of the House as Lord Privy Seal, found that the lack of a departmental base was, as always in British politics, a source of weakness.⁴

The most awkward result of Eden's handling of his Cabinet changes was that Butler and Macmillan were each led to believe that he was the Prime Minister's deputy. Although

Butler had the advantage of youth in the competition for the succession—being six years younger than Eden, whereas Macmillan was almost three years older—the position was uncomfortable. All other aspects of the rivalry, as indeed all other aspects of British politics, were shortly to be overshadowed by the Suez Crisis. Butler's Suez record is explored in less detail than perhaps one might have wished. But Mr Howard is clearly right in saying that Butler's statement, after the crisis was over, that he had been unshaken in his support for the policy does not conform with the facts—it was only that the criticisms that he voiced or implied were not enough to bring about a confrontation with his colleagues.

From that time on, he had a new hostile element in the Party to add to those alienated from him over India and over Appeasement. Such must be the explanation of why after presiding over the Cabinet during Eden's absence in Jamaica, he was not the man called upon to succeed him when Eden's doctors gave him no option but to resign. Mr Howard does not accept the view that it was US pressure that forced a new Prime Minister upon Britain as the price of financial support; still less would his narrative support the claim recently made that Macmillan was party to an American intervention designed to put him in office.⁵ It was rather that the members of the Cabinet who were consulted by Lord Salisbury for the most part took the view that the Party's poor morale would be better served by the promotion of Macmillan: a view with which Churchill concurred.

Butler's next disappointment was Macmillan's failure to offer him the Foreign Office, a post which he understandably

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³ The Swedish businessman involved in some of these transactions was Dahlerus, not Dahleras as Mr Howard gives it.

⁴ Robert Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1986), pp. 404 ff.

⁵ W. Scott Lucas, "Macmillan's plot to topple Eden", *The Independent* (15 August 1987).

coveted; but he did accept the Home Office and was once more and successfully head of a great department. Mr Howard argues that Butler's willingness to take whatever job came to hand and to carry on with what was in his words "a perfectly adequate professional relationship" with the Prime Minister was a weakness, and that he had a position in the country which would have enabled him to make better terms. It is the record of what Howard calls "the years of Pooh-Bah" that gives one the feeling that while Butler wanted to be Prime Minister, he perhaps did not want it enough.

Mr Howard's very convincing account of the 1963 leadership crisis is critical of Butler along the same lines. In his view, Butler could have insisted upon Macmillan resigning in the wake of the Profumo affair and upon his own succession as clearly the senior commoner in the Cabinet, with Reginald Maudling as his only rival. Instead, the amendment to Macmillan's Life Peerages Bill, allowing existing peers to disclaim their titles, produced two further candidates—Hailsham and Home—further to complicate the issue. Macmillan's illness and the fortuitous position of Home as President of the National Union at the time of a Party Conference enabled him to give the succession a push in Hailsham's or Home's direction. In the end it came out with Home being recommended to the Sovereign; and there is of course some irony in the fact that while "Appeasement" helped to deny the premiership to Butler, Home did not suffer from having been with Chamberlain (as his PPS) at the fatal Munich meeting.

Mr Howard believes that even then Butler had a chance, if he had at once secured with the other three principal candidates for the succession a pact that they would all refuse to serve under Home. If so, he let the chance slip. But it might not have worked. He might have remembered the Relugas Compact, through which the Liberal Imperialists hoped (but failed) to prevent Campbell-Bannerman becoming Prime Minister in anything but name. In any event, Rab accepted the Foreign Office, Maudling agreed to remain as Chancellor, and the possibility of becoming Prime Minister had finally vanished. After the Conservative defeat in the 1964 election, Butler lost his chairmanship of the Research Department and of his other main link with the Party, the chairmanship of the Advisory Committee on Policy—the latter to Edward Heath,

⁶ *Baldwin*. By ROY JENKINS. Collins, £12.95.

⁷ I set out the current state of the debate on the authenticity of the Zinoviev letter as it stood a few years ago in my book *Wars and Welfare: Britain 1914-1945* (1984), pp. 139-40. The usual view has been that the letter was forged by a group of Russian émigrés in Berlin and foisted upon the Foreign Office with the connivance of individuals in Conservative Central Office and the Intelligence services. In 1977 the historian Christopher Andrew summarised the evidence, both internal and circumstantial; he concluded that, while the full truth may never be known, the view of the Baldwin Cabinet's committee and of senior Foreign Office officials that the letter was genuine cannot easily be set aside.

The *Daily Mail* came into the story because it got hold of the letter and threatened to publish it. No one before Mr Jenkins has ever suggested that it made it up.

⁸ Roy Jenkins does not point out one bizarre connection; the headmaster of Harrow who had Baldwin flogged for sending a pornographic letter to a cousin at Eton and who then turned up as Master of Trinity when Baldwin was an undergraduate, was Rab's great-uncle.

of a much junior political generation. What was to come (but from a Labour Prime Minister) was an appointment as grand as any he had held, and perhaps the one to which Butler was must suited—Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, where his great-uncle had preceded him. Of all this and of Butler's happy and fulfilling family life and artistic interests, Mr Howard is to the end an admirable chronicler. Perhaps the choice of biographer was not so bizarre after all.

IT HAS LONG BEEN accepted that Baldwin's choice of biographer, G. M. Young, was an unfortunate one, and Roy Jenkins, Baldwin's latest biographer,⁶ clearly shares this view. What several references (including a rather bizarre entry in the series of feline biographical notes on minor characters with which Mr Jenkins has padded out his otherwise all too brief book) do indicate is that Mr Jenkins totally fails to grasp Young's distinction as a scholar and historian, not destroyed by this one failure. It is no doubt partly the result of the fact that Mr Jenkins's excursions into history have been made in the intervals of a busy political life, and that he has not much concerned himself with academic scholarship in the fields into which he has ventured. It could certainly be said that his *Baldwin* would have been improved if he had spent his post-Brussels years on research rather than on the creation of the Alliance that has turned out to be a Misalliance. If Mr Jenkins had devoted himself to keeping up with historical investigation, he would not have taken it for granted that the Zinoviev letter was a forgery, still less have asserted that "it started life in the offices of the *Daily Mail*"—a statement which not even the supporters of the forgery thesis would support.⁷

NO NEW SOURCES have been explored by Mr Jenkins; for documentation we have to go to earlier lives of Baldwin. His book stands or falls by the extent to which his judgments on Baldwin and the events in which he took part have actually been illuminated by his own political experience; and to some extent they have been. Mr Jenkins, who had the opportunity of observing Rab at close quarters does not find any genuine similarity between Baldwin and Butler: "It is difficult to think of two careers of more contrasting shape, or two minds which worked more differently."⁸ On the shape of the two careers, there can be no argument—Baldwin was thrice Prime Minister; Butler twice failed to make it. But on the difference in their minds, another opinion is possible.

Of course there are differences between Baldwin—whose strongest instincts were for creating a political mood and using it to promote the Conservative Party's cause (and, once leader, his own within it) and who had no talent for or liking of the chores of administration, or legislative ambitions—and Butler, who was above all a doer (there is no "Baldwin Act" on the statute book). Nevertheless, both were Conservatives; and the weakness of Roy Jenkins's approach to Baldwin is that he is neither a Conservative nor fully able to grasp what to be one would imply. Despite his Labour roots and membership of Labour Cabinets, Roy Jenkins has probably always

been at heart an Asquithian Liberal—and as things stand currently, he looks like ending up as a Liberal politically. Meanwhile he has achieved what eluded Asquith, the Chancellorship of the University of Oxford.

The principle theme of his book is that Baldwin eluded most of the great issues of his own day, and preferred essentially minor ones where his talents could show themselves to the best advantage—the Abdication being thought more worthy of the Prime Minister's attention than the darkening scene on the Continent.⁹ The exception lay in the field of industrial relations and in Baldwin's genuine wish to prevent an unbridgeable gap being created between organised labour and the institutions of the State. On that there can be little disagreement.

On the other hand, while it is true that Baldwin preferred Labour to take office while in no position to do much harm, it would need more argument than Mr Jenkins has found space for to uphold his thesis that Baldwin definitely wished to see a two-party system restored, with Labour as the alternative governing party. That is not the kind of thinking that Conservatives go in for, seeing that they regard themselves as the natural party of government all the time. Baldwin, as Mr

Jenkins points out, was a master of the House of Commons when in government—no post of "Leader of the House" was needed or contemplated before Churchill, except when the Prime Minister was a peer—but not in opposition.

The crisis of 1931 is central to Mr Jenkins's argument. Had Baldwin not been indulging in his passion for holidays abroad, and had Neville Chamberlain not been in charge of the Party's fortunes at the crucial time, Mr Jenkins believes that there would have been no National Government and that the crisis would have been resolved by the creation of a new Conservative or Conservative-Liberal government. The fact that the National Government did come into being was from Mr Jenkins's point of view a catastrophe, since it destroyed the new balance of political forces built up in the 1920s. To prove that this was the case Mr Jenkins would have to suggest that the errors in subsequent British policy, whether in the foreign or the domestic field, would have been avoided by a Conservative administration. It is hard to see why this should have been so. Alternatively, he must give reasons for believing that the 1935 election might then have returned Labour to office, presumably on the "swing of the pendulum" argument.

Such musings are permissible but they do not clarify our understanding of Baldwin. This biography can be read for pleasure and the occasional malicious aside. But it does not get one much further. The formidable nature of Baldwin's political gifts—so lacking in Rab—is stressed but nowhere explained.

⁹ Mr Jenkins indulges in the interesting speculation that if Edward VIII had remained on the throne and continued to indulge the fascist and Nazi sympathies which Jenkins ascribes to him, Churchill might have had to intern his Sovereign.

The Stone In My Palm

The stone
In my palm,
Smoothed by the waves
Of centuries
Not seas,
In colour green:
Unfaded by light:
Smaller than a hazel-nut,
A lone world in miniature,
Heirloom to shadow,
Once lay in the gift
And power of Caesar.

When Trajan
Gave that stone
About AD 100,
Words were engraved upon it
Not feelings, showing that Caesar,
Through caprice or love
Gave to a man of Greece, Actean
Shipped and bought,
What should have been his right
The birthright
Need and spirit of any man—
Freedom.

John Hales-Tooke

Books Encountered

Life in the White Man's Grave: A Pictorial Record of the British in West Africa. By PHILIP ALLISON. Viking, £14.95.

Achingly evocative prints, cartoons, and photographs assembled and annotated by a veteran British forestry expert who spent his working life in south-western Nigeria. Rimmed in white like old snapshots, with the text printed on grey, these recall the booklets for old BBC Schools broadcasts. Nostalgia, *Schadenfreude*, History, and post-colonial guilt.

Constitutions in Democratic Politics. Edited by VERNON BOGDANOR. Gower, £29.50.

Twenty essays, based on papers given at a conference at the Policy Studies Institute in 1986. Contributors include S. E. Finer, Ghița Ionescu, Geoffrey Marshall, and Roger Morgan, who writes on "the European Community". The editor stresses change and development against static analysis.

The Secret Servant: The Life of Sir Stewart Menzies, Churchill's Spymaster. By ANTHONY CAVE BROWN. Michael Joseph, £19.95.

Massive (800-page) study by an author whose reliability has sometimes been questioned, and whose book has attracted attention from the Treasury Solicitor. It repeats some well-known stories (the Venlo incident, Ultra) and allegations (the betrayal of "Prosper", Eastwards disinformation, links with Canaris), and suggests that Philby was disinformed too. To be read warily.

Forbidden Knowledge: The Paranormal Paradox. By BOB COUTTIE. Lutterworth Press, £9.95.

A "reluctant sceptic" investigates seances, Uri Geller, astrology, telepathy, etc., with a magician's expertise. So far, he has found natural explanations, or part-explanations, for every case. The most interesting parts are the gaps. These include the place where the index should be.

The Dilemma of Style: Architectural Ideas from the Picturesque to the Post-Modern. By J. MORDAUNT CROOK. John Murray, £25.00.

The second part of the subtitle is mildly misleading: anyone expecting an assessment of fashionable neo-Georgian will be disappointed. But the Professor of Architectural History at London University gives full value for money in his intertwining of taste and technology from Romanticism to New Brutalism.

Talking Across the World: The Love Letters of Olaf Stapledon and Agnes Miller, 1913-1919. Edited by ROBERT CROSSLEY. University Press of New England, £18.00.

A touching piece of social history in the letters exchanged by the philosophical teacher and his future wife between 1913 and 1919. He spent the war years with the Friends' Ambulance Unit, while she supported conscription. Some of the letters foreshadow his Wells-like later writing, notably *Last and First Men*.

White Boy Running. By CHRISTOPHER HOPE. Secker & Warburg, £10.95.

Stunningly vivid, funny, and sad, this combines a return trip to South Africa (in 1987, after some twelve years' absence) with memories of "growing up absurd" there, in "an asylum where the inmates are in charge". Hope's adventures and stories show that the events in his novels are simply versions of the truth.

Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies. By CLAYTON R. KOPPES and GREGORY D. BLACK. I. B. Tauris, £17.50.

Painstaking account of how the Office of War Information persuaded all major studios (partially excepting Paramount) to toe the patriotic line, sometimes with dire results such as *Mission to Moscow* (good old Uncle Joe) or *Mrs Miniver* (Greer Garson as a democratic middle-class Lady Bountiful). Some of the plot summaries are a riot.

1791: Mozart's Last Year. By H. C. ROBBINS LONDON. Thames & Hudson, £12.95.

"It may prove difficult to dissuade the public from the current Shafferian view of the composer as a divinely gifted drunken lout, pursued by a vengeful Salieri", writes Professor Landon: but his book is more than an anti-*Amadeus*. With fine illustrations and apt musical quotations, it freshly documents the life and the last great works—*Requiem*, *Flute*, and *Tito*.

The Hereditary Bondsman: Daniel O'Connell 1775-1829. By OLIVER MACDONAGH. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £16.95.

An Irishman, now Professor of History at the Australian National University, the author disclaims writing a "life and times"; but his biography is also a study of modern Irish culture and nationalism. He plans a second volume to cover 1830-1847.

Seeds of Bankruptcy. By DAVID MARSLAND. The Claridge Press, £12.95.

A sociology teacher at Brunel University attacks his discipline for "querulous sniping at liberal democracy and a consistent inclination to underplay the oppressive character of totalitarian societies". Many sociologists, he says, blow on the market, neglect the entrepreneur, pander to bureaucracy, exaggerate inequality, and undervalue work. Heinz Kiosk, this is your life.

The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture. By FRANCO MORETTI. Verso, £24.95.

Jane Austen, Balzac, Charlotte Brontë, Dickens, Flaubert, Goethe, Stendhal . . . the great *Bildungsromanciers* meet subtle and scholarly gaze, exposing their assumption that "the biography of a young individual was the most meaningful viewpoint for the understanding and the evaluation of history". Then psychology dismantled the individual; sociology stressed the collective; youth revealed its narcissism. And the form died. Discuss.

Passion and Cunning and Other Essays. By CONNOR CRUISE O'BRIEN. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £18.00.

Lively, combative, sometimes breathless articles on (and often against) such subjects as Pope John Paul II, South Africa, Ireland, Rousseau, Robespierre, Norman Podhoretz, and Zionism. His testy polemics are invigorating because seldom predictable.

Visions and Blueprints: Avant-garde culture and radical politics in early twentieth-century Europe. Edited by EDWARD TIMMS and PETER COLLIER. Manchester University Press, £29.50.

Richly detailed authentication of a familiar story, but with unexpected twists. "The paradox", write the editors, "is that the poets frequently did attempt to provide blueprints for a new society, while the politicians were often predominantly inspired by imaginative visions."

1688: Revolution in the Family. By HENRI and BARBARA VAN DER ZEE. Viking, £14.95.

Delightfully written tricentenary account of the "Glorious Revolution", concentrating on the four royal protagonists—James, Anne, Mary, and William—and making a seemingly dull tale a human historical drama. The authors are the former London correspondent of *De Telegraaf* and his English journalist wife.

The Global Fix. By BEN WHITAKER. Methuen, £7.95.

Timely pocket edition of what Cape in hardback last year called *The Global Connection*: a brilliantly comprehensive, fair-minded, and thoroughly argued study of narcotics production, trade, and abuse, with tough discussion of what can and cannot be done. Production and trade, it suggests, will continue as long as demand: our main failure is on the causes of abuse.

R.M.

Paul Groves

In Vino Veritas

Candlelight. Something from the village of Pauillac, a noble little number picked up last year, a perfect marriage of luck and judgment. Rachel looks radiant, a blend of May and September: both vernal and mature. *And* she cooks

like an angel. Eight of us sit around their fine beech table (made in High Wycombe). Steve never fails to astound by his superior knowledge; Angela cringes. "You know swans sing before they die. . . ." (I sometimes wonder if he's off his hinges)

"Well, I reckon most animals more or less sense when their time is up. Take this. . . ." He nods at the saddle of lamb. "Duress is the name of the game. Who's to say how it was when it croaked? Trauma is locked into the carcass to this day."

Those four Dubonnets have loosened his tongue. "And what's the betting sheep get piles, or malignant tumours of the lung?" "Steve!" she breathes, growing distressed. "No, let's face facts." He blithely smiles. Toby ripostes, "The grape's hard-pressed,

the plates are fired, silence is broken: nothing's perfect." We all laugh; though Steve gets serious. "Yes, you've spoken a kind of truth. But meat is murder—don't take this personally, Rachel. Half of what we eat is Out-of-order—

like a sign on a shithouse door. When last did you think that radiotherapy is far too expensive for livestock? Then what do farmers do for the dying: herd them into a hospice? We know the answer. Roasting. Frying.

Braising. Verily!" He slurps his wine. Angela leaves the table close to tears, handkerchiefless. "Here, use mine", Rachel says, looking through Steve, hard-eyed. "*Voilà*, my dears", he grins. "And *Rachel* is Yiddish for *ewe*."

CONTROVERSY

Religion, Science, & Morality

A Short Guide, with a Long View—By STANISLAV ANDRESKI



IT IS AN historical paradox that science developed in those cultural environments where the tenets of the dominant religion were in sharper contradiction to scientific findings than in other civilisations. The most important step in the development of science was the laying of its conceptual foundations by the ancient Greeks: the idea of rigorous mathematical inference (Thales); of a mathematical system as a set of consecutive and logically consistent inferences from a small number of axioms (Euclid); of invariant causality in nature (Anaximander); of logic as a system of rules of valid reasoning (Aristotle); of scientific law as a mathematical description of regularities in nature (Archimedes)—to mention just a few among the most salient achievements. The outlook of these creators of science stood in complete contradiction to the religion of the masses, who feared and worshipped a plethora of gods and demi-gods to whose wayward acts the natural phenomena as well as the fate of humans were attributed.

If the rise of science had depended on an absence of contradictions between its findings and the content of the dominant religious beliefs, China ought to have been its birthplace—because, of all the great religions, only Confucianism made no specific assertions about the causes of natural events. To a large extent, the same is true of Buddhism in its original form. When Buddhism became a religion of the masses, it absorbed strong ingredients of animism, personifying deification and ritualism. Nevertheless, not even the popular variants of Buddhism contain cosmological tenets so specific as various parts of the Old Testament, which are therefore so open to contradiction by the findings of science.

Given that inculcation of the norms of conduct is, as a rule, intimately linked with religious teaching and ceremonies, it would be plausible to surmise that a civilisation whose

religion stood in least danger of being contradicted by science would be able to absorb science with fewest social dislocations, even if it was not its birthplace. Yet the historical fact is that Confucian civilisation collapsed as a consequence of its contact with the West. There is no evidence, however, that this was due to the intellectual impact of science on Confucianism. The causation seems to have been as follows: the uncontested supremacy of the bureaucratic Mandarin class made it extremely conservative, and precluded the emergence of a counter-élite able to force changes and lead an adaptation. With adaptation barred, and survival in an unchanged form made impossible by military and economic pressure from outside, collapse was inevitable.

Thanks to the titanic researches of Joseph Needham, we know that Chinese proto-science and technics¹ were much more advanced than was hitherto believed in the West. Nevertheless, although in technics in general—as well as in many particular discoveries of a more theoretical nature—the Chinese surpassed the Greeks by a fairly long stretch, they never reached the same level of clarity and systematisation; and consequently they failed to create equally good logical and mathematical tools of scientific reasoning. (The difference can be explained but this is not the place to attempt it.²)

Christianity and Islam incorporated into their dogmas the myths of the ancient Hebrews, which had been produced at a rudimentary level of culture. These myths contained specific assertions, about the nature of the world and various miraculous events, which were incompatible even with the scientific knowledge possessed by the ancient Greeks. (Eratosthenes, for example, not only knew that the earth was a sphere but was able to calculate its circumference with accuracy—which is astonishing, given the simplicity of his method.)

The physical specificity of many Judaic, Christian, and Islamic dogmas ensured conflict between the theologians and the practitioners of science; it varied in intensity but was always present in some form. In the lands of Islam, despite the early efflorescence of science, which around the year 1000 A.D. reached a level far above anything known in pre-Renaissance Europe, the conflict was soon thereafter resolved by the total victory of religion and an extinction of scientific inquiry. In Christendom the conflict between the Churches and the scientists, begun by Copernicus, continued for centuries. The scientists, despite many reverses, gradually gained the upper hand. The last great battle centred around Darwin.

¹ I am following here Lewis Mumford, who adopted the term used in all the languages of Continental Europe. "Technology" has been usefully defined as "technics based on science". The indigenous Chinese technics never reached that point of fusion.

² Partial answers to this question can be found in my book *Max Weber's Insights and Errors* (1984).

I. The Rulers' Dilemma

OPPOSITION TO science was not prompted solely by fideistic commitment, but also by organisational loyalty to the Church and the feeling that its power, even its existence, depended on general acceptance of the beliefs which were endangered by scientific speculation. There was also a fear that the entire social order would collapse if its religious props were weakened. The modern history of Western (and later also Eastern) Christendom was permeated by this multiplex dilemma, which consisted of the following considerations.

1. The social order depended (or at least was believed to depend) on observance of the rules of conduct taught by the Church.
2. These rules, as well as the ability of the Church to instil them, depended (or were believed to depend) on general acceptance of the dogmas.
3. As these dogmas were regarded as forming an unalterable whole, rejection of any part of them was seen as leading to rejection of the rest.
4. Many of these dogmas were contradicted by scientific discoveries.
5. Consequently science was seen as a danger to religion and the social order.
6. On the other hand, once science progressed beyond the initial stage, it became a source of military and economic power. Therefore, by rejecting it a state would in the long run ensure its own defeat and destruction.
7. So both rejection and acceptance of science were perceived as fraught with danger.

Many turns and oscillations in the modern history of Europe and the Americas can be explained by the manoeuvres of rulers and élites in their effort to avoid both dangers.

II. Science vs Dogma

FACED WITH the tension between science and religious belief, the rulers, churchmen, and intellectuals adopted various attitudes—which fall more or less squarely into the following broad categories.

1. *Suppression of Scientific Study.* The most famous examples are the trial of Galileo, and the burning of Giordano Bruno—who refused to recant his adherence to the views of Copernicus. The latest instances come from “the Bible Belt” in the USA, where teaching about the theory of evolution was forbidden in the 1930s. The survival of science was due to a growing unwillingness of temporal rulers to collaborate in its suppression once they realised that it might be useful in war. (Its first uses were in gunnery and navigation.)
2. *Avoidance of Contact with Science.* Due to this realisation, contact with science was not fully banned in any European state after 1700. In the Ottoman Empire, however, no schools taught science until almost the end of the 19th century; it tried to provide for its military needs by hiring foreign technicians (mostly Italians). Owing to the control of education by the religious orders, and to non-participation in

oceanic navigation, scientific studies ceased in the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania about a century-and-a-quarter after the death of Copernicus. This state of affairs lasted until the last decades of the 18th century and contributed to the weakness and the destruction of the Kingdom. The early Lutherans were against science but this attitude changed when Lutheranism became an official state religion. Nowadays only small sects like Jehovah's Witnesses or Pentecostals avoid contact with science. Few of them, however, refuse to use goods produced with its aid.

3. *Compartmentalisation of Thought.* Here the crucial feature is a determination to disregard the logical relations between dogma and the findings of science; they were both accepted as true, despite their mutual contradiction. This solution was (and to some extent still is) most common among the educated classes, but it was never stable because there were always people who insisted on being logically consistent in their beliefs, usually opting for science and rejecting religion—either all religion, or at least its orthodox form.

4. *Pruning the Dogmas.* People who wished to retain some roots in the old religion rejected those dogmas which had been contradicted by science. Usually such attempts led to some form of deism which preserved religious awe and the desire to worship something greater than mankind, but rejected the anthropomorphic image of God and the accounts of miracles. Deism became the personal creed of many philosophers and scientists, but they never formed a religious community. However, the Quakers, who began as fundamentalists, later evolved into a community whose creed can perhaps be described as deism.

Under this heading we can also place Henri de Saint-Simon's attempt to establish “the New Christianity”, which was to be based solely on the sayings of Jesus, while the Old Testament and later additions by Saints, Popes, and theologians were discarded. Saint-Simon maintained that the teachings of Jesus could be subsumed under the single principle of “universal brotherhood”. The divine origin of this commandment, he argued, was proven by its astounding novelty when it was first enunciated, by its simplicity, and by the impossibility of improving upon it almost 2,000 years later. Saint-Simon believed that the task of science was to make implementation of this commandment possible. He vacillated between deism and acceptance of the divinity of Jesus.

5. *Metaphoric Reinterpretation of Dogma.* Whereas most deists rejected the Bible, recent movements within some of the Christian Churches (especially the Anglican and the Lutheran) wish to revere the Bible as a source of inspiration with religious feelings; but, instead of taking it to be literally true, treat it as a collection of allegoric expressions of moral and metaphysical insights. They wish to preserve most of the rites and hymns, reinterpreting them along similar lines. This also seems to be the case in the most reformed branches of Judaism.

6. *Free-thinking Rationalism.* This outlook entails rejection of all claims to communication with supernatural beings. Its upholders accept as valid only that knowledge which is derived from observation and from logical inference, which they regard as for ever modifiable by further discoveries. They see

no need for any organisation which has power to enforce beliefs and suppress dissent. They put all their hope in the power of reason to order human affairs.

7. *Scientistic Substitution*. Here the idea is to invent a doctrine which is completely compatible with science, or even somehow emanates from it, but nevertheless performs the social functions of a traditional religion—sanctioning rules of conduct and promoting social cohesion. Not many attempts along this line have been made. The most notable case was Auguste Comte's Positivism, "the Religion of Humanity". This erstwhile disciple of Saint-Simon departed from his master's respect for Christianity, which he regarded as belonging to a superseded stage of civilisation. However, he thought that the Church had performed an indispensable function in cementing the social order by moulding the minds of the masses. This function had now to be taken over by a new Church-like organisation whose teachings would be based on science in general, and on the new science of sociology in particular.

8. *Pseudo-Scientific Crypto-Substitution*. The essence of this approach is replacement of the old religion by a doctrine which claims to be scientific, but in reality consists of assertions—unsupported, or even contrary to the facts—which are held to with a dogmatism and intolerance antithetical to the scientific outlook. In contrast to the failure of Comte's open substitution, one variant of crypto-substitution has been very successful indeed. It is, of course, Marxism, which can be described as a pseudo-scientific quasi-religion.

III. Religion & Social Order

THOSE TYPES of approach (or, if you prefer, solutions) to the tension between science and religious belief are related to differing views on the nature of morality (in the wide sense, which includes civic and economic ethics) and its relation to religion. In a survey of various views of this relation, the following broad categories can be distinguished.

1. *The True Believers*. For them there is no problem, since they regard the teachings of their Church as the Word of God. Any idea of perceiving religion as a means to another end is completely alien to them. Most are primarily concerned with Salvation, and are interested in the social order only in so far as it implements the Divine Commands.

2. *The Instrumentalist Upholders*. The pure type of this category values a religion only because of its usefulness as a prop of the social order. As motives are often mixed, however, we find true believers (like Joseph de Maistre) who also express an instrumental valuation when they argue (usually to enlist the support of non-believers) that their religion is necessary for maintenance of the existing social order.

More or less pure instrumental valuation can be seen in the cases of non-believing rulers who used religion as a tool in the exercise of power (Henry VIII of England, Frederick II of Prussia, and Catherine II of Russia are among the many examples.) The diagnostic difficulties here are increased by the fact that many instrumentalist upholders conceal their

motives and pretend to be believers, because promotion of belief is likely to be more effective if instrumentalist motives are camouflaged.

3. *The Irreligionists*. People who fall under this heading think that religion is neither true nor socially useful. Some of them believe it to be socially harmful, because it is a brake on the progress of knowledge and a source of hatred and strife.

The irreligionists fall into two sub-categories: (a) *the Rationalists*, who place their hopes in the working of unfettered reason; (b) *the Crypto-substitutionalists*, who want to impose their dogmas—which are atheistic but are also anti-rationalist. (To repeat: the Marxists come under this heading.)

INSTRUMENTALIST upholders of religion can be divided into the following broad categories.

1. *The Traditionalist Instrumentalists*, who feel that only established religion can provide adequate support for the social order which they wish to preserve.

This attitude was very common in the British upper class throughout the 19th century, and among the French aristocracy between 1815 and 1848, although atheism was widespread in this class before *la grande Révolution*. The most famous exponents of this view were two French writers of the earlier part of the 19th century: Joseph de Maistre, and Louis-Ambroise de Bonald. At the end of that century Benjamin Kidd became famous in English speaking countries by putting forth similar views.

2. *The Innovating Instrumentalists*, who agree that a social order needs to be supported by religion, but believe that the traditional religion or religions have become incapable of performing this role because their credibility has been undermined by science. Consequently, they propose either to reform the old religion (whether by pruning dogma or reinterpreting it metaphorically) or to replace it by a new religion compatible with science. Innovating instrumentalists disagree about which of the social functions of the Churches should be retained under the new dispensation.

The Churches supported the social order by the following means:

(a) Institutional arrangements for inculcating norms of conduct.

(b) Backing these norms by supernatural sanction, especially the promise of Heaven and the threat of Hell.

(c) Enforcement of unanimity by suppressing dissent.

(d) Ceremonies which reinforced beliefs and facilitated internalisation (in the psychoanalytic sense) of the norms.

(e) Coordination of these activities by an ecclesiastic organisation.

HENRI DE SAINT-SIMON saw little need for these last three. He thought that moral education, with some supernatural backing (but without the threat of Hell), would suffice. In contrast, Auguste Comte proposed getting rid of supernatural sanctions but wanted to retain, though in a new form, enforcement of unanimity, cere-

monies, and centralised control of an organisation modelled on the Catholic priesthood. He also wished to retain the task of moral education, on the need for which he agreed with Saint-Simon.

In my introduction to a selection from Comte's writings I have argued that his plan fits the reality of Communist rule far better than anything Marx ever wrote.³

IV. Problems of Substitution

IN CONTRAST to pseudo-rationalist, crypto-substitutional dogmatists (of which the Marxists are the chief example), rationalist irreligionists favour neither imposition of a rigid set of dogmas nor persecution of dissenters. On the question of moral education, however, they fall into two broad categories: *the Rationalist Moralists*, and *the Permissivists*.

Rationalist moralists have faith in secular moral education. They believe that free thought and debate can lead to elaboration of a better ethical code than in the past. They also assume that effective inculcation of norms of conduct is necessary for the existence of any social order—although they maintain that this can be achieved without assistance from religion.

The question of how to replace moral education based on religion by its equally effective secular equivalent lay at the centre of the preoccupations of the French school of sociology led by Emile Durkheim. They were trying to find a way out of Auguste Comte's conundrum without recourse to the means he proposed: censorship, and the introduction of a new, rigid dogma. In Britain, this line of thought was pursued by the great (though still not fully recognised) sociological historian and historical sociologist, John Mackinnon Robertson.⁴ In France, school curricula before the First World War were considerably influenced by Durkheim's book *L'Éducation Morale*.

Permissivists, in contrast, see no need for moral education. They assume that human nature is intrinsically good; and that, if you let everybody do what they like, inherent goodness will prevail. They do not accept the view that there are evil propensities in everybody, or that some people are fundamentally wicked. (At least in theory! In practice, permissivists do not extend this indulgence to "authoritarians" and "racists".) This assumption underlies countless recent publications and pronouncements on education, where it is proclaimed that the aim of education is to develop fully all the potentialities of the pupil. It is never admitted that anybody may have a potentiality for evil, which ought to be inhibited rather than developed.

The idea of the undiluted goodness of human nature goes back, of course, to Rousseau. Current educational theory and

practice in the West is the first attempt to apply it on a massive scale. Although it is presented with massive adornments of the paraphernalia of science, this theory rests upon an act of faith unsupported by—or even contrary to—factual evidence.

Although Western Marxists profess permissiveness, their comrades, who had power to carry out their crypto-substitution, act as stern moralists. Whereas in the West the media are free to make money and/or gain influence by anti-socialising and cretinising the masses, Marxist rulers use the media, as well as the schools, for the inculcation of civic, economic, and even domestic virtues . . . as they conceive them. The effectiveness of this systematic moral education is, however, undermined by three factors:

(a) The moral nihilism of the Marxist theory.

(b) The extreme divergence between the real nature of the system and what it *ought* to be, according to its doctrine.

(c) The practice of constantly making false assertions (which is permitted by the first of these factors and necessitated by the second). The falsehoods are so blatant that no scientific study is needed to ascertain them; common sense and everyday experience suffice.

It is difficult to teach people to be honest when they know that you never cease to tell them impudent lies. Consequently, the moralism based on Marxist pseudo-scientific crypto-substitution seems to be producing a similar result to the permissive amorality of the West.

V. The Present & the Future

THE PROBLEM of moral consensus in the age of science raised by Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte, far from losing topicality, has become more important because of the dangers to mankind's survival which in their day no one could have imagined. Faced on one side with the possibility of instantaneous mass suicide through war, and on the other with the prospect of a slow but ineluctable demise, in consequence of over-population, pollution, nuclear accidents and other forms of destruction of the environment, mankind has a chance of survival only if it behaves more rationally as well as more ethically than it has done hitherto: with greater foresight, self-discipline, and altruism—or, at least, a more enlightened and prudent regard for the common good. Well-intentioned but irrational actions—based on refusal to take cognisance of the causal relations which in fact exist—cannot safeguard mankind from the self-propelled march towards destruction. This is why nothing good can be expected from fundamentalist revivals.

Equally dismal are the prospects along the road of permissive amorality. The abandonment of moral education by institutions which have performed this function in the past, while the media debase the masses, cannot fail to erode the moral basis of social cohesion, and thus bring about the condition of "war of all-against-all" which sooner or later will lead to general self-immolation.

It is clear where these two roads lead. What is debatable is

³ See *The Essential Comte* (ed. S. Andreski, 1974).

⁴ On J. M. Robertson, see Martin Page, *Britain's Unknown Genius* (South Place Ethical Society, London, 1984). Also G. A. Wells (ed.), *J. M. Robertson (1856-1933) Liberal, Rationalist, and Scholar* (Pemberton, 1987).

whether moralistic rationalism is viable. It cannot be said that it has failed, because it has never been tried as an outlook of an entire population. Western societies moved rapidly from a moral education based on traditional religion (usually accompanied by a cult of the monarchy) to permissive amorism. The only historic case of an approximation to moralistic rationalism as the basis of social order is pre-1911 China. This was a pre-scientific civilisation, and it might be argued that moralistic rationalism could provide an even more adequate prop for a society which was based on science.

There are, however, two qualifications to this inference. Confucianism was not atheistic, but contained deism—the notion of the Heavens as a spiritual force—as well as reverence for ancestors. Second, Confucianism was the creed only of the élites; the masses adopted the non-esoteric forms of

Buddhism and Taoism. Their cult of the ancestors, moreover, had a primitive, animistic character, and was intermixed with other magic practices.

So we have no historical example to show that morality can be maintained among the masses without the help of religion. It does not therefore follow that this could not be achieved in a scientific civilisation, although it seems that there are many people who are temperamentally ill-adapted to life in the cold world of science and rationalism without the emotional comforts derived from belief in supernatural protection. Perhaps emotionally stimulating and aesthetically satisfying rituals—whether newly elaborated, or retained from traditional religion as Saint-Simon advocated—might help people to live without yearning to believe in the supernatural.

The question remains open.

Transitional Objects

February bites: I stay indoors,
All day, I clean my small son's room out.

This is a sad business: so many things
He'll not miss now, when I throw them away—
The smashed Spitfires, the box of Russians,
Afrika Corps, and the kneeling Tommies:
Some plastic hand-grenades and the Jack of Hearts,
Conjuring tricks, torn star charts, rusting puzzles—
I dump them all as I listen to the Persian bloodshed.

Now, dusty Punch with his papier-mâché nose
Broken, and Judy, her bosom come to pieces;
And, deeper in mythology, hairless Teddy,
His head held on by a thread, and a cock
Sewn in blue felt with no comb left.

Grubby they are, mangled and torn,
Quite exhausted by the love spent on them.

We have enacted the Punch and Judy comedy:
Here is the last child preferring solder,
Logic gates and electronic computers.
The love-objects all go into the dust-bag,
Having served their purpose.
I seem to be throwing meanings out by the score!

That I love you today makes it even more painful,
For aren't we just like the dolls and cuddlies,
Standing for "the other", until we drop away?

To what shall I devote myself, now Punch has gone?
On Sunday nights, while we had a family,
I used to hear, off-stage, the teddy-talk fantasies.
What are we left with now, between Marx and Allah?

The iron February earth is tight-lipped
And I cannot get a whisper out of it.

David Holbrook

AUTHORS & CRITICS

Confronting Evil & Its Unreason

Rationalist Reflections on the Holocaust—By LEWIS S. FEUER



ALMOST ALL HIS READERS will share the feelings that George Steiner has expressed concerning the vast tragedy of the Holocaust. The differences of opinion that some of us may have pertain to the philosophical and sociological judgments that he attaches to what he prefers to call the Shoah.

Professor Steiner doubts not only whether human language is adequate to understand the horrors symbolised by Auschwitz. He asserts in addition that the concepts required are "not amenable to rational analysis". In his view, the catastrophic experience of the Jewish people proves "the essential inadequacy of pragmatic-positivist levels of experience". The Holocaust that has now burdened them with "the inconceivable guilt of God's indifference" arose, he maintains, from "the core of European history and culture". And only "theological-metaphysical analysis" will help explain its phenomena—including the persistence, for instance, of "Jew-hatred" even when and where there are no Jews left. What he calls (mistakenly, I think) "the Auschwitz experiment" has for him contravened all philosophical rationalism, leaving us solely "the haunting tenacity of the metaphysical and the theological presences in our psyche". If Auschwitz cannot be written or spoken of intelligibly, George Steiner seeks none the less for a "rehumanisation of language" that would restore its lost capacities to speak to God.

Does the Holocaust raise a basic problem of language, of "Jewish hermeneutics"? Job, although a non-Jew, and reprobated by some of the ancient rabbis, could still adapt his

LEWIS FEUER, Emeritus University Professor at the University of Virginia, discusses George Steiner's article "The Long Life of Metaphor", which we published in the February 1987 ENCOUNTER. Among Feuer's books are "Psychoanalysis and Ethics" (1955), "Marx and the Intellectuals" (1969), "The Conflict of Generations" (1969), and "Ideology and the Ideologists" (1975). He is also the editor of Marx and Engels, "Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy" (n.e. Fontana, 1984). His articles in ENCOUNTER include "The Case of the 'Darwin-Marx' Letter" (October 1978) and "Ideology & No End" (April 1973).

charge against existence: "Cursed be the era in which we were born, cursed be its peoples and its rulers." He would still deny to God's and history's three yes-men that the Jews were being punished for wrongs they had done, though at the end too, Job would reiterate a faith in God even though He slays us. God was still addressed by the Jews after the massacres in 1648 had killed perhaps half their number in Poland. (Meanwhile, the chieftain of the Cossack barbarian murderers, Chmielnicki, is still extolled in the Soviet annals as "a national hero", and the only American scholarly biography on him filters out the massacres into oblivion.)

Perhaps the adolescent Spinoza in Amsterdam, as he listened to the newly-arrived refugees, decided that it made no sense to say that God was "good". And in 1904, after another in the series of Kishineff massacres, the Hebrew poet Hayyim Nahman Bialik, crying out against the Russian pogroms and defilements, shelved his faith in a God that had abdicated and urged instead the defensive use of weaponry guided by human arms and eyes.¹

It is not language, or its resources, that fail us. It is, rather, that with the Holocaust the upper limit of the human organism's empathetic tolerance of pain is reached; our pain-receptors become dulled. We have our endurance limits, as metals have their fatigue. And perhaps, in our primitive evolutionary past, such limits helped our ancestral tribes to survive their ordeals of massacre. Why is it that no film based on the Holocaust has affected audiences as much, say, as *Chariots of Fire*, dealing (in part) with an Olympic runner who was a Jew? It is because we respond to hope, effort, achievement; whereas the Holocaust presents predominantly a history of passive suffering, unredeemed by even the martyrdom of some defeated alternative.

THE "QUANTITATIVE" STANDPOINT is regarded as a sacrilegious approach to Jewish passivity during the Holocaust. Nevertheless, its use shows that, as compared to other peoples, the Jewish resistance displayed at least an equal heroism against odds that were rather greater than others confronted. When any guerrilla or partisan resistance is evaluated according to the criteria of military science by

¹ See, in ENCOUNTER, the "Men & Ideas" portrait "On Rereading Bialik", by David Aberbach (June 1981).

its analysts, a series of questions is asked: How much aid could the partisan group have counted on from the surrounding local population? How much moral support did they receive from other nations? What supply of arms was made available to them?

As compared to the French Resistance, also the Norwegian, the Dutch, the Belgian, the Polish, the answers are starkly simple: the Warsaw Jews received virtually no support from the surrounding local populations. Not a single radio message of the Allies' concern emanated from transmitters in Britain; the arms that came to them from well-supplied Polish sources were pitifully meagre, and usually required payment. By contrast, such European peoples as the French received radio communications all the time, were favoured with British missions, and were regularly provided with military supplies. Despite such contacts, close to a million French workers volunteered to be collaborationist labourers in German factories.

The Jews, in fact, were the one people to whom the eyes, ears, and hands of the world were practically closed. That under such conditions an armed resistance was sustained for the last weeks is exceptional to the laws of military probability. The one organisation—the Polish Communist Party—that had been designed for underground action had been “liquidated” by Moscow in 1938; and Joseph Stalin so much hated the idea of an autonomous Jewish people that in 1942 he executed the leaders of the Jewish Bund, Erlich and Alter, as “Nazi spies”. (The Soviet régime still fails to acknowledge this crime.)

Mathematical language, when it is used dispassionately, does not fail to tell the truth of even such events as the Holocaust. The world's leading authority on the destruction of European Jewry doubts that the entire fire-power of the Warsaw partisans exceeded that of a single US infantry company. But the extraordinary event was that such an improvised resistance appeared at all under overwhelming contrary moral and material obstacles, especially when one bears in mind the relative capitulations of more favourably provisioned peoples.

THE HOLOCAUST INDEED has not as yet been recorded in the pages of some great work of literary art. Many looked to the supreme Jewish story-teller, Isaac Bashevis Singer, to translate into fiction the reality of the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto. Singer had lived as a young writer in Warsaw, attended its Writers' Club meetings, and described mordantly the lucubratory debates among its Communist, Trotskyist, and Marxist adherents. He judged, however, that he could not write convincingly of the Battle of the Warsaw Ghetto, in which no miracle intervened; he could not people it with his dybbuks, Cabbalistic devils, and malignant spirits, or draw on his readings in Gurney's *Phantasms of the Living*; he could not profane the battle's reality with his make-believe world. Moreover, notwithstanding his sarcasm for pathetic and pretentious ideologists, the fact is that every standpoint and every party—liberal and conservative, all the varieties of Marxism and

anarchism and, most of all, orthodox religion—failed during those testing years to help avert catastrophe for the Jews. Singer with his Cabbalistic resignation found alien the courageous will of his fellow Polish Jew, Marek Edelman, the (still surviving) second commander of the Warsaw detachment, who strangely then chose to remain in Poland (where he practises cardiology). Did I. B. Singer sense that the surrender of the intellect, the recourse to mythical interventions, would have constituted a sacrilege upon the memories of the Ghetto's defenders?

ARE THE JEWS, as Steiner says, “a traumatised, crazed people”? Traumatised, undoubtedly; but “crazed”, no. Those who are self-consciously Jews have responded rationally to the truncating gash aimed into their collective consciousness. Rationalism remains ascendant among the Jews; they have generally not regressed into anti-science movements; indeed, in the universities, the Jewish students turn increasingly to the sciences, and away from the socio-humanities whose teachers have too often shown themselves to be ideological and irrational. They take most pride in their Nobel Laureates in the sciences, and in the USA admire those applied scientists who saved American military and naval power during the War and post-World-War times—Oppenheimer, Teller, Rickover. On a recent journey to Australia, I found that the most admired among Jews is Sir John Monash, the engineer who commanded the Australian Corps during the First World War (and whom such as Lloyd George and Montgomery of Alamein regarded as the outstanding military leader in the Allied Armies).

Probably much of the Holocaust-originated pessimism persists because a basic sense of justice (rationalised retaliation) was largely frustrated among the Allied combat soldiers and the liberated Jews. At one Nazi death-camp that American soldiers captured, the GIs were so horrified by what they saw that they turned the Nazi ex-guards over to the freed Jewish prisoners, who then killed them. Technically, a trial should have taken place, and indeed it was to Churchill's honour that he insisted against Stalin that legal procedures should prevail. But no one has ever dared suggest impeaching the American soldiers who allowed a Hobbesian justice where the Nazi state had made a norm of murder.

Would the world today have felt more “balanced” psychologically if, as originally intended, the Atomic Bomb had been invented a year or two earlier, in 1943 or 1944, and used against the chief Nazi military centres? The spectacle of the murderers and their huge aggregates of accomplices who eluded justice in both West and East Germany was scarcely mitigated by the capture of an isolated Eichmann. The combative, militant energies that should have been expressed externally against Nazi targets were then dammed and turned inward among the peoples of Western civilisation. From this process, Jews were to some extent rescued psychologically when the advent of Israel brought the opportunity for a Jewish Army that, without benefit of ideology, fought solely and simply for their own lives and welfare.

Is it, then, true that the “causal dynamics” of the Auschwitz asphyxiation-chambers arose “from inside the

core of European history and culture"? A cultural determinism can be every whit as awesomely fatalistic as an economic one, and perhaps as equally fallacious. For one thing, European history was probably more pluralistic and multi-cored than Professor Steiner allows. By and large, the rationalistic-scientific movement worked mainly outside the lines in which anti-Semitism flourished. When Francis Bacon recorded his vision of the new scientific culture in his *New Atlantis*, he made its proponent the Jew Joabin. Probably Bacon had heard tell of the Jewish metallurgist, Joachim Gaunse, whose innovations in the smelting of copper had helped cast the cannon deployed against the Spanish Armada. To German philosophers after Hegel, Bacon was a "vulgar empiricist", though it was the Baconian inspiration (as the great rationalists Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, acknowledged) that stirred them in a common enterprise.

In a tautological sense, the Holocaust was an outcome from "the core of European history"; but from the factual standpoint other outcomes, including happier ones, would have been equally, or even more likely. The Kaiser's Imperial régime did not foreshadow Hitler's Holocaust. During the First World War, for instance, when it appeared that the Left-wing Young Turkish régime was considering a supplement to its massacre of the Armenians with one of the Palestinian Jews, the German Emperor intervened to prevent such an act. The German Army that occupied Polish and Russian territories during the First World War was relatively benevolent toward the Jewish population. Russian-imposed restrictions were abrogated, elementary education became mandatory, and secondary schools and universities were opened to Jewish students; Jews were given a fair representation on municipal councils; and liberal German Jews were brought in to help administer the occupied Jewish areas.

IN SHORT, the "core of European history" has had inconsistent strains. One can think of many eventualities that might have cancelled the possible occurrence of a Holocaust. If America had joined the League of Nations, and lent its military and economic power to preventing the Nazi entry into the Rhineland—if Right-wing Bolshevik leaders had been of a tougher character—or had Trotsky not been enthralled by an overcompensating Party loyalty from calling upon the Red Army to remove the gangster Stalin—or if the German Social Democrats, under a more energetic leadership, had directly embattled Hitler's thugs in their Nazi Party strongholds—or if Léon Blum, the first French Socialist Premier, had not shrunk from the idea of a preventive war against the Nazis—or if the British public and Parliament had been less enveloped in self-comforting pacifist garments.

There was a Germany, too, that had been rational, cosmopolitan, and free from "Jew-hatred", and whose working class had welcomed enthusiastically the personal leadership of Ferdinand Lassalle. Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche found their most encouraging words among Jewish associates, and the German Social Democratic Party was the only one that made Darwin's ideas central to its mode of thought. Eduard Bernstein's revisionism in time became his

party's unofficial philosophy; and he was so much beloved by his comrades that they could not expel him when his philosophy was recognised to be a first repudiation of Marxism and ideology. The Austrian working class took for its spokesmen at different times such "non-Aryans" as Victor and Friedrich Adler and Otto Bauer. If their movement was ultimately broken and defeated, it was not historically necessary that it should fail. The mark of the Nazis, like that of Cain, was not the mark of an historically inevitable crime.

IN GEORGE STEINER'S JUDGMENT, the anti-Jewish feeling at "the core of European history" essentially derives from Christian writings, like those of St Paul, which assail the Jews for rejecting Jesus. But anti-Jewish sentiments were prevalent among Roman intellectuals before Jesus's mission, and continued afterwards. Cicero, Tacitus, Horace, and Quintilian (philosopher, historian, poet, and rhetorician) all thought that Judaism was superstitious or nonsensical. Cassius, Plutarch, Strabo, Sextus Empiricus (historians, geographer, and sceptic) agreed with this opinion, while Seneca, the Stoic minister of Nero, and Juvenal, the satirist, both thought that the Jews' observance of the Sabbath encouraged people to be lazy. There were anti-Jewish outbreaks in Alexandria on the part of its "Greek" community in the time of Philo Judaeus; and Christianity was not involved.

In short, anti-Semitism has tended to arise whenever a population regards the Jews as an "élite" people, standing apart from the cultural majority in important respects, but nevertheless thinking of themselves as potential candidates for membership in that society's élite. Paul of Tarsus evidently judged shrewdly that, by aligning himself with the anti-Jews, he would make the acceptance of Christianity that much more palatable to the masses. Joseph Stalin reasoned similarly that his Communist régime would gain in popularity with the traditionally anti-Semitic Russian and Ukrainian masses if his "Moscow trials" succeeded in driving virtually all Jews out of Soviet politics. Even today, few people care to consider that this might have been an underlying motive for the "Moscow trials". And Adolf Hitler actually bound the German people closer in loyalty to himself by attacking the Jews. For he made the German people into what might be called "a community of guilt", all sharing to some extent a complicity in the genocide, more active for some than for others. A common guilt guaranteed a common bond to fight unyieldingly, and thereby to postpone or evade the accusations and punishment they expected.

IT IS A NATURAL TEMPTATION to blame the world's ills upon philosophies we don't like, even though this procedure consists usually of examples of what we might call "the ideological fallacy". Professor Steiner thus holds that "the Auschwitz experiment" somehow discredits the "pragmatic-positivist" philosophical amalgam.

To conjoin the two philosophies is a significant blunder. William James, the greatest of the American pragmatists,

wrote page after page to define a God finite in His powers but struggling forever against forces of evil. The horrors inflicted upon all creatures, even the lowliest, by the struggle for existence, haunted James; few philosophers have felt so personally what their professional literature calls "the problem of evil", for James would accept no dialectical device for sublimating evil into good. The founder of pragmatism, Charles S. Peirce, similarly thought the "problem of evil" the most profound for human thought, even if insoluble, and prophesied darkly that the latter part of the 20th century would witness the release of massive forces of evil on a scale hitherto not seen. John Dewey, America's leading pragmatic philosopher for half-a-century, was the most philo-Judaic thinker in the history of philosophy. Many were the Jewish students guided in their contributions by Dewey's generous, thoughtful spirit, while Jewish trade-unionists, obscure Zionist teachers, and lonely academic outcasts called upon him. He, without condescension, understood their problems, and acted. All the *pragmatic* philosophers rejected *positivism*. What is gained by joining them rhetorically?

It is noteworthy that after 80 years "pragmatic" is today used more often than any other philosophic adjective to connote a person who, without recourse to ideology, tries to resolve problems in a way that advances the well-being of all. The word "existentialist" has meanwhile joined the limbo of tattered placards.

In any case, can we use the political beliefs of philosophers to verify or falsify their philosophies? Are we to regard Bertrand Russell's logical atomism as verified by his life-long repugnances toward America? Or are we to reject altogether Henri Bergson's intuition of free will because he never published a passage against the injustices in the case of Captain Alfred Dreyfus? And why do hermeneutists who make such linkages usually forbear from citing that it was Heidegger-the-hermeneutist who signed as Rector for his university the decree that deprived all Jewish students of scholarship aid?

Rational analysis has not been overwhelmed, or undermined, or overthrown, by the macro-evils of the Holocaust. Rational philosophers and scientists did indeed fear that such a catastrophe was potential for modern civilisation. Herbert Spencer, the melancholy philosopher of Evolution, was apprehensive in his last years of the "re-barbarisation" that was beginning to take place among civilised peoples, and was profoundly depressed. Charles Darwin himself pondered that "at no very distant date . . .

an endless number of the lower races will have been eliminated by the higher civilised races throughout the world". Given his own moral sympathies, he detested the consequences that he acknowledged as foreseeable from his theory of natural selection and the struggle for existence. Freud had only a slender hope that European civilisation could contain the energies of aggression and hatred that were seething in 1932, and he had found no nostrum in Romain Rolland's Asian "oceanic" mysticism. Einstein never tried to give a course of lectures in Germany after 1919 when the German "students" threatened to assassinate him; he found a philosophic answer in Spinoza's determinism, in explaining the recurrence of barbarism with a civilised face.

THE HOLOCAUST, though it has contravened no epistemologies or technical philosophic tenets, has nullified the cheerful mood that Samuel Alexander, the Anglo-Jewish philosopher, best expressed when he wrote in 1892: "However much bloodshed is involved, no struggle of nations aims at extermination. . . ." His "natural piety" was founded on the conviction that Love conquers Strife, and that Emergent Evolution finds new culminations in the successive ideals of mankind. That belief is quite gone. Rational reflection tells us that his contemporary, E. Ray Lankester, was more closely correct in perceiving that human history might well illustrate the far more pervasive pattern of degenerative evolution, that regress rather than progress may always entangle the evil choices of mankind. Benjamin Franklin, the wisest American of the Enlightenment, almost abandoned all faith in humanity when a company of Pennsylvania frontiersmen massacred an entire settlement of peaceful, defenceless Indians, men, women, and children. "The Blood of the Innocent Will Cry to Heaven for Vengeance", Franklin wrote. That vengeance never came; there is no law of retribution in earthly history. But Franklin did the next best pragmatic thing; he volunteered to carry a musket in the force that was recruited to march against the massacrists. He could never, however, remove his doubt (as he wrote to his fellow scientist Joseph Priestley) whether "the Species were really worth producing or preserving."

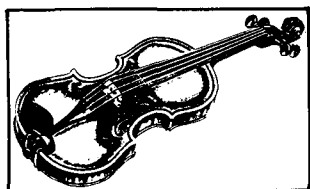
Against such a background, rational men in our time, far from renouncing their rationalism, will in this post-Holocaust era hold all the more steadfastly to a rationalism tempered by a stoic outlook. It has in the past availed to help civilisation withstand barbarian insurgence.

MUSIC

An Interview with Anne-Sophie Mutter

Playing on a Stradivarius

By Reinhard Beuth



FOR TEN YEARS NOW you have been working almost exclusively with musicians who are very much older than yourself. What is it that fascinates you about Karajan, for instance?

MUTTER: When he's rehearsing pieces he has conducted thousands of times and that we all know inside out, he always finds some new way of phrasing something, he finds little details, the mistakes one makes over and over again, and he irons them out with a kind of merciless determination that I very much admire. He is still looking for perfection.

I don't think age makes any difference in music anyway. What counts is experience—and the degree of genius, I suppose. These are the crucial differences; age in itself is unimportant. There's no such thing as a ten-year-old musician or a fifty-year-old musician. I don't think there's any real difference. Either you acquire a certain maturity as a person—and that is not necessarily connected with age—or you don't. It's more a question of the changes you have been through, the disappointments experienced—the vicissitudes of life.

—Yes, but aren't there pianists of your own age who are very good, perhaps even one or two good young conductors?

WHEN ANNE-SOPHIE MUTTER was five years old she knew she "wanted to be a violinist . . . and nothing else". At six she won the highest prize ever awarded in the West German young musicians' competition "Jugend musiziert". She exhibited an exceptional talent, and was excused from compulsory state schooling to be educated privately. The Swiss violin teacher Aida Stucki took charge of her musical education. And it was Herbert von Karajan who introduced her for the first time (ten years ago) when she played with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra at the Salzburg Festival—she was spared the long climb up through the provincial concert-halls.

The 24-year-old violinist spends ten months of the year on tour, living out of suitcases—and always with the violin case that houses her Stradivarius, the "Emiliani". REINHARD BEUTH interviewed her in Cologne after a rehearsal of Beethoven's Violin Concerto.

MUTTER: Oh, certainly. There are some extremely good young conductors, that is quite true—and they include several pupils of Karajan's. But for chamber music, trios or duos, there's no one of my generation around just now whom I would get excited about. Actually, I'm looking for a pianist at the moment—for recitals, not for duos or sonata evenings. Not a great musician, in other words, just an intelligent person.

—Who is your model among violinists?

MUTTER: Model is such an over-used word. Among musicians I admire Karajan above all, of course—and Rostropovich. A violinist must see not only the violin part, only violin music—that's not enough. The musicians I admire are the ones who have this broader vision. Karajan has a phenomenal knack of judging things from outside—particularly violin concertos (piano concertos, too). He's not a violinist, nor is he capable of thinking like a violinist; things like fingering and bow changes he's not interested in at all, couldn't care less about them—which allows him to take a more detached approach, technically as well. The result is that he has ideas about phrasing that you might have as a singer, say, but not as a violinist because you are just too close to the actual material, too wrapped up in technique. It has nothing to do with technical problems, bow changes, or some leap or other, but simply with things like a gear-change, as it were—things that you think you can't surmount technically and that are getting in the way of your musical development.

—So you don't have a violinist as your model?

MUTTER: You mean, whom do I admire? It has to be Jascha Heifetz . . . and David Oistrakh.

—Since music is a rather abstract affair, some listeners imagine something "to go with it", paint themselves a text. What is your approach? From the point of view of content as well? Is your approach purely through sonority, or is it primarily formal?

MUTTER: I think the first and most important thing is the architecture—that's the most significant when it comes to getting closest to the composer's ideas. . . . Then studying the original bowings and the original scores. So many sins have been perpetrated on Mozart's violin concertos—and I suppose on his operas, too; all his music. So many things were falsified by different editions; many grace notes, many trills were simply written into the music or taken out. With Beethoven, too. I have myself made three corrections which the editors had simply notated completely wrongly. So the first thing for me is to go back to the *ur-Text*. Obviously with Mozart that means the original bowings—after all, he was himself a phenomenal violinist. Not with Beethoven; many passages in the Violin Concerto are conceived pianistically. Perhaps that's why it's such a mammoth task; it somehow always defies conquest, every time. I've played it on many, many occasions and it's always a strain, spiritually and intellectually, from start to finish. The structure and phrasing are so fragile, so incredibly delicate. The Beethoven Concerto is

music on a very high intellectual plane, because a single phrase in the first solo can throw out the whole of the first half of the first movement. If I fail to get my concept across, I know that the rest of the Concerto just flounders. With a Romantic—Tchaikovsky, say—that doesn't happen; overflowing emotions play a bigger part there. But with Beethoven it's *ein rein geistiger Prozess*, a purely intellectual and spiritual process.

I would say that each composition needs to be approached differently. And then there's something you cannot control, namely the emotions you bring to the piece, not knowing whether they are the right ones or the wrong ones, and not even being interested at the time because formally you have the piece under control. And then there's your interpretation, your own concept—when a painting is illuminated in a different way, one's view of it changes. I don't think that can be controlled.

—*You mentioned the original bowings and this suggests that you might find it attractive to work with someone like Nikolaus Harnoncourt, for example, the expert on early music.*

MUTTER: That's not a bad idea, actually. But you know his style of music-making—back to the old instruments willy-nilly. If I can drive a Porsche 911 I'm not going to drive a 905. I mean, that's only a mild parallel. But seriously, going back and searching for just how awful it used to sound—that's not the kind of thing that appeals to me. On the other hand, though, he's right—we ought to take the original texts more seriously; that's an extremely important aspect of his work.

—*Do you play Vieuxtemps and the rest of the “demon fiddler” repertoire?*

MUTTER: Oh yes, absolutely; of course I do. . . . Vieuxtemps, Wieniawski,¹ all of them—it's great fun—and Paganini, too. It gives intense physical pleasure without making excessive spiritual demands—not like Beethoven.

—*Paganini presumably composed for his own level of ability, which was unrivalled at the time. Now everyone plays those pieces. Do all violinists today play as well as Paganini did?*

MUTTER: No, they certainly don't. There's always something very athletic about Paganini, very intricate. And unfortunately technique is often confused (I get a bit annoyed about this) with speed, and perhaps also with good intonation. People completely forget that technique doesn't merely mean playing fast and in tune—you have to be able to do *that* by the age of five. Paganini needs a wide range of expressive coloration. Lots of players get through it cleanly, sure, but not

with *esprit*. You really have to get on top of it, and flick the switch; then it comes.

—*Are you suggesting that the technical standard of violin-playing hasn't developed?*

MUTTER: It certainly hasn't got any higher, no. Heifetz will always remain an exception, of course—that's obvious. There's no one (I'm not talking about personality now; I'm talking solely from the viewpoint of technical standards), no musician, not even a pianist, who has what Jascha Heifetz had. That kind of perfection doesn't exist. No, I don't believe we've developed any further. Even listening to old recordings, of David Oistrakh or Ginette Neveu, for example, I don't get the impression that our generation has discovered anything new in technique.

TURNING TO your education, now—you very largely avoided the formal German educational system, didn't you?

MUTTER: Oh, completely. I had four years' private schooling, and the rest in Switzerland.

—*Do you (as a recently appointed professor at the Royal Academy of Music in London) have any opinions about how musicians are taught in Germany?*

MUTTER: We don't have enough good teachers, particularly not of the Carl Flesch school, and that's the major problem. But looking at the various differences in national standards, I think Germany is tremendously strong. In fact I'm convinced that, after Russia and Israel, we are the strongest nation in Europe as far as classical music is concerned—at training players, that is. And that has to do with our German discipline, for their musical development is inadequate. But our character just won't permit a half-finished technical product.

I notice this in our orchestras, too. There's that German drive towards perfectionism, whereas the English have a much more relaxed approach. I find they tend rather to gloss over technical problems; they don't get worked up about them. But in Germany we have a very good, securely-based training; not enough artistic development, but a good solid musical education to a high technical standard. And you can see this in the competitions too.

—*Today's composers complain that the big-name interpreters ignore contemporary music. Do you, too, “live in the past”, musically?*

MUTTER: Musically, I live between Bach and Lutoslawski—and Lutoslawski is still very much one of today's composers. Moret, too, has promised me a violin concerto, which I shall be performing for the first time this year; it's dedicated to me. We're always being blamed because the only moderns we play are the ones who have “made it”, such as Lutoslawski or Dutilleux.²

¹ Henri François Joseph Vieuxtemps (1820-81), Belgian violinist and composer; Henry Wieniawski (1835-80), Polish violinist and composer.

² Witold Lutoslawski (b. 1913), Polish composer and conductor; Norbert Eloi Moret (b. 1921), Swiss composer; Henri Dutilleux (b. 1916), French composer.

There's a simple reason for that: on the one hand, those composers have something to say, and on the other hand they're still rooted in Bach. Yet they use the traditional alphabet in the kind of way that it has to be used today. Lutoslawski, for example, writes enormously colourful music. He's a man of culture—our culture, from the past. His music is written not for the garden hose but genuinely for the violin, and still communicates, is still a language.

—When you choose your repertoire, do you pay much attention to the wishes of the record companies?

MUTTER: Certainly not for concerts; perhaps a little as regards timing. If you have a five-year exclusive contract, you have to record certain pieces in those five years—even if I

don't feel like it on that particular day, say. But that happens to everyone. Otherwise I'm completely free in my choice of repertoire. Still, you have to be shrewd, and make certain before you sign your own contract that you can have conductors who aren't contracted to that record company.

—Tell me, what is it that makes your 1710 Stradivarius so special?

MUTTER: What's miraculous is that an instrument like this has always, throughout its nearly 300-year existence, adapted itself over and over again to whoever plays it, like a sponge that has soaked up all that music; or maybe like a mosaic. An instrument is stamped with the character of the musicians who play on it. Certainly Stradivarius was an exceptional

Stringencies. . . .



THIS WILL NOT be a week of soothing sounds at the Royal Academy of Music, a place of some discord since the launch of a controversial modernisation. For Anne-Sophie Mutter is back in town, and pupils and staff a-like are bracing themselves for the energy her visit is likely to generate. The violinist today begins her second week of master classes. It was her stern view of the task after her first visit that helped confirm

Sir David Lumsden, the principal, in his determination to redefine the aims and practices of the 165-year-old Academy, and endure the consequent uproar among the slimmed-down student body and a pared-down staff.

One of Sir David's decisions criticised as "cosmetic and glitzy" was to institute a number of international chairs, bringing world-class soloists to the Academy to end a situation that meant sending Britain's best young performers elsewhere to acquire the final polish. Among those soloists are Miss Mutter, the 24-year-old violinist who has been a protégé of Herbert von Karajan since giving her first recital at 13.

MISS MUTTER had, in her first three days, sent the entire institution into collective mild shock. "This is", said Sir David then, "a most formidable young lady. She is clearly on no ego-trip in coming here. She has laid down a challenge to the faculty. The pressure is on us to meet it." Academy professors had spent months sifting their brightest violin pupils to perhaps twenty who would get their magic hours with Miss Mutter. She promptly cut the group to eight. One student, she said, ought to be told *now* that a solo career was an impossibility: "He has not the temperament, has not the . . . brain."

THAT WAS ON Day One. On Day Two, she targeted the staff. They had surely observed a basic lack of technique, a slackness in the manner of holding the bow which would make it impossible for many of the students ever to reach soloist standards? This, which should have been corrected at the age of eight, must be worked at now. And, no, "of course it wouldn't do to leave the students to plug away at scales in their spare time. They don't. They won't. Some professors here say they do not have time to control

this. I think they must make this time. Do you not agree?"

The question tacked to the end of the sentence was typical. Anne-Sophie Mutter is too worldly-wise not to be aware of the possible nuances when she appears to be giving advice to professors grown grey in the service of the same disciplines.

"I am tough. Yes, but it is necessary. All the students in the master class are possible teachers. They must not bring their mistakes down to the next generation. They must tell not only how the great soloists of this age played but also tell *how*.

An example. There is no right way to hold a bow. There are one hundred correct ways, but what all have in common is that the hand is absolutely flexible. Obvious, yes? But many, most, of the young people I have seen have wrong right hands. It seems a convention here. It must be stopped.

I must not, please, give a wrong impression. There is so much that is good in these students. A great instinctive musicality, marvellous to work with. They understand fast. They change fast. But many sit in a cage made of that lack of mastery. I want to bring other violin players to teach those who will in turn teach. It is very long-term.

But it is why I came to Britain. The need to give help was there. I do not wish to give offence, but the Academy was accepting standards that were less than correct. Britain is known to produce great orchestras. But great soloists are rare. I know you cannot plan virtuosi. But you can produce children who grow with their instruments with a respect for the composer, the command to give every single note the merits it needs. It is not enough to just go *blurrrrrrr* over the passage and make a nice sound."

SIR DAVID, who insists that this first year had produced results "beyond our wildest dreams" in terms of virtuosi enrolled and money raised, was not as wounded as one might suppose by the strictures from the newest, youngest inhabitant taking coffee in the staff refectory. "That is precisely why we asked her and the holders of the other five international chairs to join the Academy. There is too much truth in what one leading conductor told me last year:

'Britain? Oh, yes, absolutely superb at producing second violins'."

Brian James
in THE TIMES (London)

violin-maker even in his own day; there's no doubt about that, it's common knowledge. If you hear a really good modern Italian violin, for example, one built according to Stradivarius's model—an "exact copy", in other words a phenomenal instrument—it sounds new, because it hasn't yet been moulded by an interpreter. I know straight away when someone's been playing my violin. One can tell the change immediately. . . .

—*The violin, of course, wasn't invented to fill large concert halls as a solo instrument, though that's what it's been required to do since the last century.*

MUTTER: Well, Stradivarius did make his violins for quite large halls.

—*Can a soloist know whether the sound is carrying in a hall? And if so, how? What adjustments can one make when playing in the typical modern concrete bunker?*

MUTTER: Acoustics is a difficult area. It's almost impossible to check whether the sound is carrying; I mean, there are violins that carry and others that don't carry. You can test this yourself. I did it with my first Stradivarius in the Berlin Philharmonic hall, with Herbert von Karajan. We chose my first instrument together; and there were five or six different violins. We walked about, listening—this one carries, that one doesn't. . . . Of course, you buy a violin with as big a tone as possible, good quality, a violin that really comes through.

You can check that relatively easily, but the acoustics of different halls are something else entirely. In the new Cologne Philharmonic concert hall, for example, we have the little problem that the wind section always sounds too loud in the auditorium but can hardly be heard on the platform. That's a big adjustment to make, because I always have the feeling that the wind passages are far too quiet—there's not the right support underneath.

There's nothing you can do about it. You send someone out into the auditorium and believe what they tell you. You can't change much yourself as regards the acoustics. Above all, I myself don't play softer or louder to match the acoustics.

—*You mean, you're at the mercy, so to speak, of acoustically inadequate concert halls?*

MUTTER: We all are—all musicians. But what's even worse than poor acoustics—after all, an audience can get used to poor acoustics; they know approximately how they need to hear in order to get the most out of the music in their heads—what affects your interpretation far more than poor acoustics is the way the audience is listening. That makes a difference. A *piano* will be different, for instance.

—*How do you mean?*

MUTTER: Well, you know that it's either *totenstill*, dead quiet, and you can do a real *pianissimo*; or it's not quiet, people are leafing through their programmes, and a *pianissimo* will be

lost. The result is a completely different mood, a completely different basis for an interpretation. That automatically changes the way I play. Making music is a dialogue with the audience, you see; and if I don't get an answer, the next question automatically comes out differently. The audience plays an enormously important part in a concert.

—*Isn't there a need for today's interpreter to try to imagine what the effect of a piece of music must have been at the time of its composition?*

MUTTER: The trouble is, we've developed so much further. Musicians like Mozart and Beethoven were in any case enormously ahead of their time. Beethoven certainly didn't compose for the *fortepiano*; he imagined the sound of the modern grand piano. And Mozart undoubtedly also had the idea of using vibrato. But those are all things that only came into music slowly. Musicians of genius always hear differently from common folk. Stravinsky and his contemporaries weren't understood in their day, the reason being that our hearing is simply not so developed as that of a genius.

—*But isn't that precisely the problem about interpreting older music? What distinguished it in its day is something that today's interpreters and today's listeners can't begin to imagine. I mean, for people who were accustomed to Mozart, Beethoven's Violin Concerto arrived like a musical bolt from the blue. Can an interpreter convey that feeling today?*

MUTTER: Today it's a completely different feeling. I could perhaps recreate it for myself if I recall the effect Lutoslawski had on me when I heard him for the first time. But all the rest—Beethoven and Mozart—it's in our blood, isn't it? It's a different kind of excitement. Every interpreter has his or her own sound, his or her concept of how to illuminate a composition. To that extent it can be exciting, but in a different way. But it *must* still be exciting, it *must* still come like a bolt from the blue, even if it's very familiar.

—*How do you achieve that?*

MUTTER: You see, I've been playing the Beethoven Concerto for so long and have played it so often that it's perhaps a bit ingrained by now, but even so it's always as if I'm playing it for the first time. I know exactly how I'm going to play it but it's still for me, something completely untouched, *völlig ungespielt*, quite simply something that's never been played before, if you like. It's not something I just churn out over and over and over again.

—*You could always go on tour with a sonata programme for a change.*

MUTTER: I'm not doing any sonata evenings at the moment—haven't done any for almost two years now.

—*Is there a reason for that? Chamber music is becoming increasingly neglected as far as famous interpreters are concerned.*

MUTTER: Well, I do play about ten trio evenings a year with Rostropovich and Bruno Giuranna. That's as much as we can manage, simply because there are three of us and dates have to be found in three diaries. If one of us is busy in May, another can't make April. As for seriously working up a new duo programme, I simply haven't time just now. We've played a great deal of Brahms, though—Brahms and César Franck. Sonata recitals especially—Beethoven sonatas, for instance—need a tremendous amount of preparation. And also I haven't found the right pianist yet.

—Have you ever played real solo programmes . . . the Bach partitas, for example?

MUTTER: No, and I don't have any plans to do so in the immediate future.

—I believe you live in the same place as Boris Becker—Monte Carlo?

MUTTER: I live there too, yes.

—Boris Becker says, he lives there not "for tax reasons" but to get away from being stared at when he goes to the disco in the evening. Do you go to discos, too?

MUTTER: Not any more, no. . . . But I must just say that I started to give public performances when I was thirteen, and I could only do five or six concerts a year because I wanted to develop normally and didn't want to head suddenly for a fantastic career. So I developed my repertoire gradually. But you do need a very good violin, and a very good violin is terribly expensive. You can't have both: pay taxes at home and live a musically responsible life—and own a Stradivarius. I'm afraid there's only one thing to do: economise on taxes. . . .

—Do you know the story of the quarrel between Nathan Milstein and the conductor of one famous orchestra? They just couldn't agree about a concerto, and suddenly Milstein handed him his violin and said, "Why don't you play the solo part?"

MUTTER: Understandable, but mad! I wouldn't have let my fiddle out of my hands for anything.

AUTHORS

Jean-François Revel, the French philosopher and critic, writes a regular column for *Le Point* in Paris. His most recently translated work, *How Democracies Perish*, was published in 1985 by Weidenfeld (London) and Doubleday (New York).

James Thurlby has worked in both publishing and industry, and has published a number of short stories.

Duncan Fallowell has published two novels, *Satyrday* (Macmillan, 1986) and *The Underbelly* (Macmillan, 1987). He is currently writing a travel book, *To Noto*, about his recent drive from London, through France, along the Riviera, and through Italy, to Noto in the south of Sicily. The journey was inspired by conversations with Sir Sacheverell Sitwell at Weston Hall in Northamptonshire; the "portrait in conversation" of Sir Sacheverell published here forms the basis of the book's opening chapter. *To Noto* will be published by Dent in 1989.

John Gohorry's collections of poems include *A Voyage Round the Moon* (Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets, 1985) and *A Letter from Lewis Chaucer* (Perdix Press, 1985).

Adam Czerniawski is a Polish poet, critic and translator, now living in England. His *Selected Poems 1953-1978* were published in Poland in 1982; *The Burning Forest*, his latest collection, has just been published by Bloodaxe Books.

Dinah M. Mendes took a BA in English literature at Columbia University and a Ph.D. in clinical psychology at the Ferkauf Graduate School of Yeshiva University. She is now in private practice in New York City.

Elizabeth Jennings's volumes of poems include *Moments of Grace* (1980), *Extending the Territory* (1985), which won the W. H. Smith Award, and *Collected Poems* (1986). All are published by Carcanet who will bring out *The Sonnets of Michelangelo* this September.

Max Beloff, Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration, University of Oxford, from 1957-74, and Principal of the University College at Buckingham, 1974-79, was created a life peer in 1981. His most recent book is *Wars and Welfare, Britain 1914-15* (Edward Arnold, 1984).

Fyodor Burlatsky is at present the political editor of *Literaturnaya Gazeta* from which (8 February) the BBC Monitoring Services made the translation which we publish. He is the deputy chairman of the Soviet Association of Political Science, a Professor of Philosophy at the Institute of Social Sciences (of the Central Committee of the CPSU), and was a Soviet advisor on the Helsinki "Final Act" negotiations on Human Rights.

Bernard Lewis, the Cleveland Dodge Professor of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, was from 1949-74 Professor of History of the Near and Middle East, School of Oriental Studies, University of London. His numerous books include *The Arabs in History* (1950, 5th rev. ed. 1980), *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1961), *Islam in History* (1973), *Studies in Classical and Ottoman Islam* (1976), *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (1982), and *The Jews of Islam* (1984). This article is excerpted from his latest work, *The Political Language of Islam*, published this spring by the University of Chicago Press.

Stanislav Andreski, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Reading, has been Professor of Comparative Sociology at the Polish University in London since 1982. His books include *Reflections on Inequality* (1975) and *Max Weber's Insights and Errors* (1984). His articles on "The Syphilitic Shock" appeared in the October 1980 and May 1982 issues of ENCOUNTER.

Edward Pearce is a columnist for *The Sunday Times*, and author of two volumes of sketches of Parliamentary personalities, *The Senate of Lilliput* and *Hummingbirds and Hyenas* (Faber, 1983, 1985). His latest book, *Looking Down on Mrs Thatcher*—published in 1987 by Hamish Hamilton—includes several of his ENCOUNTER articles.

THEATRE

Dim, Drab, & Dazzle

By Edward Pearce



BLACK COMEDY is an uneasy medium. Are we there for the laughs, for the bitterness or, as may be the case with Stephen Bill's well received *Curtains*, for improvement? Not that Mr Bill is without humour, but it is the humour of a bleak situation, the ineptitude with which people grapple with a moral problem. An 86-year-old woman, who has a mended hip, residual hearing, is incontinent, and in intense recurring pain from arthritis of the spine, is a formidable central prop to a conversation piece.

What evolves from her family's predicament is not comedy. Despite showing at the Whitehall (home of disappearing trousers, shrine of Ronald Shiner and Brian Rix), this is domestic tragedy laced with little ironies. Mr Bill has a very fine ear for the dullness and banality of language. With the exception of a single character, Douglas (lovingly played by that under-esteemed actor Alfred Lynch), this is a piece without a clever character. It is at the far end of style from Wildean comedy; epigrams are made inadvertently by the people uttering them. The humorous element derives from something quite bitter in itself, the paranoid petty resentments of one sister, Margaret, and the wittering old-womanish incapacity of a brother-in-law, Geoffrey, to cope while insisting that all the coping must be done by him. Ralph Nossek comes very close to triumph as this trepidatious, benign pest who has a manic incapacity and terror of saying anything outright. It is Geoffrey's way never to finish a sentence. Faced with a crisis, he charges in as the proverbial fool, only to be pulled up before the final clause by the angel of propriety. Language for him is disembowelled and full of floating particles. Yet only Geoffrey is actually amusing.

His wife, Catherine, a driven, unhappy, dutiful daughter, who has carried all the burdens, does (at the start of Act II) what her mother long ago asked her to do in this *extremis*—kills her. Action before this has been a macabre pretence that Mother is happy and enjoying her birthday—in Margaret's parakeetishly repeated phrase “picking up”. It has been a

chronicle of the miserable incomprehension and self-delusion which attend upon sickness and senility.

In the portrayal of feeble malice Mr Bill is playing near to the Alan Ayckbourn league. Sheila Ballantine's Margaret is the sort of woman who belongs in a housecoat. She has a string of complacent excuses for never having accommodated her mother. “Well, we couldn't, could we. . . . I mean, we'd have liked to. . . . But, well, its so isolated, isn't it? . . .” I quote from memory but trust I have Mr Bill's deftly etched tone of plaintive inadequacy roughly right. There is a great tendency in this country to pick on the speech of Birmingham (and indeed the city itself) as uniquely horrible. Personally, I think the most gruesome noise made in this kingdom comes through the spare cartilage of a Liverpool nose. But the Brummie moan works very aptly here. It has a suggestion of perpetual slight surprise. And Margaret is the sort of woman who expects to be murdered in her bed and awaits in vain the arrival of the police to arrest her mercy-killing sister—if not all of them—with pleasurable anticipation; as she does that of the doctor (“They're all black nowadays”), who is certain to refuse a death certificate and who, of course, gives one.

The play works in terms of such anticipations and forestalled fears. But it is not comedy, not even black comedy. An account of a loving daughter fulfilling a promise to end her mother's life if the horror of old age became intolerable, and doing so, to a background of family twittishness, is more like grey tragedy.

BY THE STANDARDS of the Riverside, *Oh Babylon* is way over par. But then the author, Derek Walcott, is one of the two or three finest poets writing in English. His style as a playwright is at total odds with the poetry, which is mandarin and distanced, making maximum use of all the formalities. His plays—interestingly for a Trinidadian—are written in Jamaican patois.

The disappointment derives from expecting something different. At the level of a jolly West Indian entertainment touched with melancholy, the story of Rufus Johnson (West Kingston villain) and the Reverend Percival Jones (Rastafarian patriach and therapeutic con-man) is pleasant enough. The delusion of the Jamaican Rastas that salvation will come from Haile Selassie, Ras Tafari, is not a comforting one as money is collected for the state-scorched earth of Ethiopia. The reality of Marcus Garvey, much alluded to here, was in the scoundrelly tradition of American cash evangelism. The Reverend Jones (Jason Rose, a sweet performance), though something of a rascal, is sentimentally regarded, as is Rufus. The play is, in effect, a pantomime with simple folk believing a legend and making the most of it while the developers and aspirers of Jamaica's black bourgeoisie intrude only as mock enemies. It is all good-natured, affectionate, and unreal, but it is as limited in its scope as the reggae of Galt Macdermot which provides the score. Betwixt musical and pantomime with a spatter of half-hearted moralising, it makes an agreeable evening, but solemn judgments should not be entered into beyond that mild pleasure.

THE EARLY 17TH CENTURY, with its taste for out-heroding Herod in the field of sex and violence, can be luscious territory to the post-Freudian. It can also look like something Norman Tebbit would complain about if it were on television. There is nothing in Ford to equal the splendours of Webster or even the spasms of dark felicity in later Middleton. Lacking poetry, he does have a driving velocity which alone keeps a horror show of incest, murder, and dismemberment away from the abyss of giggles. Alan Ayckbourn's National Theatre production of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* is splendidly unaffected, straight 17th century, no cocktail lounges or mill-town backdrops. Indeed, it is served by one of the very finest sets one remembers seeing on a London stage. Roger Glossop has built a handsome fourfold loggia, with stairs and colonnaded walkways whose spaces serve as every kind of interior. It is extraordinarily handsome to look at, with a proper Italian feeling appropriate to a play laden with the duly attributed excess of *L'Inglese italianato*.

The incestuous love of Giovanni and Annabella is here made into a piece of greengage adolescence, somewhat overdone in the instructions to Susan Sylvester who, as Annabella, bites her lower lip and shakes her shoulders like a very excited and unsure mid-school-girl. Giovanni (Rupert Graves) is a tiresome, overwrought young fool "Lacking one well-wisher to kick him in the pants".

The characters have to coexist with a gallery of Englished Italian notions—Putana, the enthusiastic cheerleader of harlotry (whose name, of course, means precisely "whore" in Italian), Vasques, the itchy sword-player and street-fighter. There is a Cardinal who is straight out of English Protestant assumptions about the Counter-Reformation (and who shrugs off a murder committed by one of his guests as being done by the nobly-born and duly protected by Mother Church); and we see assorted bravoes and hired killers. Much of the play is stolen, however, by Bergetto (Russell Dixon), another of those pathetic, retarded suitors with one foot firmly in childhood. Mr Dixon plays Bergetto relatively gently but makes his tantrums funny and engages in some first-rate comic business as the poor lump stumble-struts around stage. As Vasques, a sort of Iago with a break in life, Clive Francis offers with Russell Dixon the only acting of the night to break the surface of a millpond of competence.

Alan Ayckbourn, by playing *'Tis Pity* straight, leaves its gaucheries naked. The atrocity of the conclusion, the ripping out of Annabella's heart, is Fat Boy stuff, intended to make the flesh creep. It also throws the direction of the audience's emotions, since at the hour of the crime Giovanni and Annabella are waiting to be murdered by the bare-chested nasties of Soranzo, her repulsive husband, under the direction of Vasques. It is as if Ford, the constructor of the play, feared to make the incestuous pair into martyrs at the hands of the Post-Renaissance criminal rich, who are far more culpable than themselves. The atrocity sits clumsily on the tenderness which Ford has conceded to his lovers. All the shrill bombast which is invested in Giovanni does not truly explain the horror. It looks rather like Ford's attempt to make a shuddering theatrical coup out of necessity, diminishing the Lovers' relative attractiveness in the company of this bunch of murderous foreigners.

DISLIKE OF FOREIGNERS influences some reactions to Tom Stoppard, Prague's dazzling gift to the Home counties. English critics dislike display, and such is the wit of Stoppard, the taste for balancing paradoxes on the point of a pin, that he is sometimes reviewed through clenched teeth. *Hapgood* (at the Aldwych) takes a conventional spy story: which Mole is betraying the Organisation? By inserting the notion of two twin spies he tosses up a soufflé of brilliant talk about particle physics. Damned fellow has the nerve to use quantum mechanics as a metaphor!

He is fascinated by the electron, the duplicitous sub-particle which can be in two places at once. One could respond with Richard Feynman's definition of another sub-particle, the *neutrino*: "Think of something almost but not quite totally useless; take your son-in-law as a model. . . ." The metaphor allows Stoppard to split Felicity Kendal—virtuous hard head and soft heart—who runs a male office and never swears, and whose heart is given to her ambling prep-school son, Joe, with his rugby and Roger the hamster. (Message sent by special courier to St Christopher's school from the Circus: "Here are new football boots, and you'll find the missing key on top of Roger's hutch.") Nobody was better designed for playing someone supremely nice than Felicity Kendal, a dove of peace with perfect comic timing. But her account of a supposed sister, rough-mouthed and louche—"This is what you always wanted, Ridley—Hapgood without the good taste and restraint"—is hilariously done.

The play has not yet been remarked for what it at least partly is, a wistful Central European celebration of Englishness. For the real division (against the theatrical ones) is between Hapgood and her only lover, Josef Kerner, melancholy Russian physicist from (aptly) divided Kaliningrad, once Königsberg. Roger Rees makes a near perfect sad Slav, despising the régime but yearning for home, keeping a tiny photo of Joe, the hamster-keeping, rugby-playing, English prep-school boy who is also half-Russian. Interestingly, Joe and Kerner—almost the only characters not at some stage in the proceedings divided by theatrical device into twitchy pairs of *Doppelgängers*—are the only ones who are *really* divided—Kerner in loyalties and attachments, little Joe in his roots.

One can fault this play if one wants. The ending, after one of the most bemusingly funny starts to a play I have seen, is anticlimactic in the manner of many solved problems. It is possible to be patronising about Stoppard's innocent infatuation with every kind of learning. The central metaphor occasionally grunts like Atlas under its burden. But, in the end, who has Stoppard's wit, which at best runs beyond Wilde, his compassion, his political serenity and sense? Which of his contemporaries has Tom Stoppard's eye for the blundering niceness of the English (done splendidly here not only by Miss Kendal but by Nigel Hawthorne as a model of warm and sceptical good intentions)?

Stoppard, behind the shimmer of metaphors, is actually best at human beings. Kerner and Hapgood are real and endearing people who engender tenderness, created perhaps by some second, unnoticed Stoppard, the particle playwright. His, after all, is the only talent big enough to accommodate two major playwrights.

LETTERS

Sweet Helen

IN YOUR "Life & Letters Today" column (July-August), you quote *The Sunday Times* in which Godfrey Smith asks: "Can anyone give me one truly memorable line about a beautiful face?"

Can he have forgotten that about "Sweet Helen"—"Was this the face that launched a thousand ships. . . .?"

EUGENE SCHULMAN

Geneva

"No Doubt Belatedly"

LONDON theatre-goers among your readers must welcome your recent sharpness over the tendentiousness in the British theatre, with almost every talented playwright in the so-called "younger generation"—with the exception of Tom Stoppard—enlisting themselves in the "Good Cause". Mindless New-Left clichés keep on resounding on the subject of "Our Evil Society", its repressiveness, its cruelties, its distasteful past and even more horrific prospects for the future. Edward Pearce, your theatre critic, has been properly corrosive as a phrase-maker; and Timothy Kidd (ENCOUNTER, January) has mustered impressive evidence for the case against contemporary British drama in his "Between Revolt & Rancour".

Just recently I saw a new play by one of Mr Kidd's "Howards", by full name Howard Barker. In *The Possibilities*, at London's Almeida Theatre, the stalwart of the British theatrical Left tries (as one critic put it) to outdo Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* in the number of atrocities committed in the course of a single evening: rape, infanticide, casual killings, decapitation, dismemberment, flogging, several varieties of torture. Savagery is pursued throughout ten mercifully short playlets with a single-minded monotony—although one London critic wrote (Charles Spencer, in the conservative *Daily Telegraph*), leaning over backwards trying to be fair:

"... But while it would be comforting to write Barker off as a manifestation of the loonier fringes of the Left, there are many moments when he achieves an undeniable theatrical grandeur. He is a genuine original who fluctuates between verbal magnificence and palpable absurdity. . . ."

Still, one can spot a little change, offering a measure of hope. Some of the plays are set *not* in our own overkilling bourgeois-reactionary society but in authoritarian East-European states! So it is no ideological surprise that there is pathos and bathos in the playwright's confession:

"I have come to realise, no doubt belatedly, that socialism too has the power to stunt life. . . ."

Soon we may be hearing that he has been discovering, "no doubt belatedly", the stunting powers of the KGB, Gulag, and Serbsky Institute of "political psychiatry".

CARL FLETCHER

London

Ardagh's East Germany

IN JOHN D. Halliday's lengthy comment (ENCOUNTER, January 1988) on John Ardagh's "The Other Germany", he goes astray by referring to the German Democratic Republic as "misleadingly named". It isn't, although Halliday is far from alone in assuming it is.

Almost all Westerners, like Halliday, react with contempt every time they encounter the apparent cynicism and hypocrisy of the long array of totalitarian Marxist states which refer to themselves as "people's democratic republics".

But this is neither cynicism nor hypocrisy. In all Western languages "democratic" refers to majority rule by universal franchise. In Communist terminology (and in modern Russia), "democratic" simply means that "the people own the means of production"—i.e., all industry has been nationalised and is controlled by the state. This usage has been adopted by all the nations unfortunate enough to find themselves saddled with a "people's democratic republic", and *they* in their turn regard *our* description of our government as "democratic" as cynical and hypocritical.

The fault, perhaps, is ours for continuing to translate the Russian word "*demokratiya*" as "democracy"; it once meant that in Russian, but hasn't for the last 70 years. "Marxist" would be a far more precise translation—and "German Marxist Republic" a far more accurate translation of the German phrase "*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*". For years, the official West German terminology was "*sogenannte [so-called] Deutsche Demokratische Republik*", although their scorn was unquestionably directed more at the impudence of the DDR regarding itself as a discrete national entity than at the apparent misuse of "*demokratische*".

DONALD R. MORRIS

The Houston Post
Houston

Arguing about Tarkovsky

CHRISTOPHER COOK's review of my book *The Cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky* (in his round-up of recent works on film, ENCOUNTER, January 1988) contains a number of misleading observations that I would like to comment on briefly.

He objects firstly to my broaching the spiritual dimension of Tarkovsky's art. This seems to me daft. "Spiritual authenticity is about as easily subject to proper critical analysis as cold potatoes", Cook opines, with the knowing smartness of someone who thinks he has written an epigram. Well, of course "spiritual authenticity" is not "easily subjected" to anything. But I would like to ask Mr Cook candidly what else he thinks criticism can be *except* the attempt to confront, in as intelligent and tactful way as the critic can, the artist in question's value system. A writer is dealing here, by definition, with complicated shades of thought, not with dogma. None the less, the work of art in the end incarnates "values": the critic elucidates these values and makes judgments about them. What else should he do if he is not to waste the public's time? Mr Cook is entitled to think that I don't practise the craft well, but he is not entitled to object to the procedure.

Nor is he entitled to remark (in the next sentence) that I write like a "religious apologist". The remark is insolent. Tarkovsky, of course, was a Christian, and any writing about him must take this fact on board. But it is a mistake in taste to imply that the discussion of religion is the same thing as its proselytisation. My book is among other things a meditation on the *difficulty* of Tarkovsky being a religious artist in a largely non-religious world. If my own comments are friendly to the dilemma—why shouldn't they be?—I am not in the least blind to the fact that for many, perhaps most, people, belief in God is regarded as an anachronism.

MARK LE FANU

London

I AM SORRY to have been the cause of such choler in Mark Le Fanu and troubled by his less than temperate vocabulary—"daft", "insolent". Not the usual currency of critical discourse, I would suggest.

Of course the critic should bring his discrimination and his intelligence, sharpened by scholarship, to bear on the value system espoused by his subject. (I would prefer to use the word *ideology*, but that is another matter.) What I missed in Le Fanu's monograph on Andrei Tarkovsky was any detailed presentation of Tarkovsky's "system of values", hence my cavil about "spiritual authenticity". I am unable to decide

precisely what the phrase means and *The Cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky* offers its reader little help in this direction.

As to Le Fanu's second objection, I have never regarded the term "apologist" as being pejorative, nor it seems did Newman or for that matter Milton.

CHRISTOPHER COOK

London

"Western Fantasy" British Realism

In an impressive article on "The Cycles of Western Fantasy" (ENCOUNTER, February 1988), Melvin J. Lasky rightly identifies the Allies as having "misjudged the Kremlin's motives and its need to turn inward and 'devote itself to building Russia up out of the ruins'". That was certainly the British Foreign Office line until well into 1945.

Typical was the FO brief for Dominions' Prime Ministers, prepared in June 1944 and declaring that the 20-year Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Alliance lay:

"at the base of our whole European [post-War] policy and we should try to reinforce it by all means in our power" (CAB 80/44).

Conversely, in 1944 and 1945, the FO's Northern Department under Christopher Warner (with strong backing from Sir Alexander Cadogan and Anthony Eden himself) repeatedly criticised the British Chiefs-of-Staff and their "Post-Hostilities Planning Staff" for insisting that possible post-War Soviet hostility should *not* be ruled out as a hypothetical planning assumption.

Yet, I cannot accept M. J. Lasky's

suggestion that it took the 1948 Berlin Blockade finally to convince the West "that a Cold War had been raging". In Britain's case, at least, realisation had dawned by the beginning of 1946. For example, in January of that year, FO Under Secretary Sir Nigel Ronald conceded that:

"We must not blink the obvious fact that the real struggle is an ideological one: social democracy versus communism" (FO 371/59911).

MOST SIGNIFICANTLY, on 2 April 1946, Christopher Warner's own memorandum on "The Soviet Campaign Against This Country and Our Response to It" was circulated. It warned that the USSR had "decided upon an aggressive policy based upon militant Communism and Russian chauvinism"; had returned to "the pure doctrine of Marx-Lenin-Stalinism"; had revived "the bogey of external danger to the Soviet Union"; and had "announced to the world that it proposes to play an aggressive political role, while making an intensive drive to increase its own military and industrial strength. . . ." Warner concluded that:

"We should be very unwise to take the Russians at their word, just as we should have been wise to take *Mein Kampf* at its face value" (FO 371/56832).

From the Foreign Office side, British official attitudes to the Soviet Union at the beginning of the Cold War have been comprehensively set out in Victor Rothwell's *Britain and the Cold War, 1941-1947* (Cape, 1982) and in Hugh Thomas's *Armed Truce* (Hamish Hamilton, 1986). My own book *Changing Direction, 1942-1947* (Sherwood Press,

1988) covers the ground from the military side and includes much of the Warner memorandum as an Appendix.

All three studies make it abundantly clear that the British sincerely hoped for good Anglo-Soviet relations after the War—whatever the "revisionist historians" of the Left would now like us to believe. But their eyes were opened to reality quite early on.

JULIAN LEWIS

London

MY POINT was not that no one in the Anglo-American foreign policy establishments had any inkling before 1948 of the shape of things to come. Many thoughtful memoranda—and indeed articles and books—were written and circulated.

The most famous was, of course, the State Department document of February 1945, prepared by US diplomat George Kennan who was to "go public" with his dissident ideas in the "Mr X" contribution to a 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. But there was a time-lag of years between "planning memos" and actual policies as determined by Presidents, Prime Ministers, and their powerful spokesmen in the field. The main thrust of both British and American foreign policy was unconsciously slow to respond to such warnings by "the best and the brightest" in London and Washington and, indeed, to react to the bitter onrushing events of a Stalinised Eastern and Central Europe, to which the views of the Kennans and the Warners were themselves a prescient response.

MELVIN J. LASKY

London

Virgin Lands & Condom Communism



RICHARD BRANSON, head of the Virgin group, is to be a director of Intourist, the Soviet state-run tourist organisation. He is believed to be the first non-Russian to be asked.

Intourist's offer to Mr Branson follows his visit to the Soviet Union last month, when he signed a

deal with the organisation to take over a large hotel in Yalta and to run a hotel being built near the Turkish border. About 5,000 British tourists are expected to go this year to the Yalta hotel, formerly a Tsarist palace.

MR BRANSON makes it clear that he is accepting the Intourist offer because of his high regard for the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov.

"He is making a tremendous effort to improve things in the Soviet Union and it is important that we give him a chance", said Mr Branson yesterday.

Mr Branson wants to open up previously undiscovered parts of the Soviet Union to British tourists. Intourist has suffered from being a cumbersome bureaucracy, and also from following tourists around and not allowing them access to many parts of the country.

OTHER PLANS involve Virgin pop artists selling their records in the Soviet Union and performing some concerts. In exchange, Virgin will bring over some Russian pop records.

He is discussing a charitable trust with the Russians, similar to the Virgin Foundation set up last year in Britain.

HE IS ALSO KEEN to sell his Mates condoms in the Soviet Union, not only to counter Aids, but to help prevent the huge number of abortions carried out each year. "Abortion is used as contraception", he says. "The trouble is that their condoms are thick, and therefore not comfortable, and in short supply."

Richard Brooks

in THE OBSERVER (London)

Erratum: "Greek" to Us

I HAVE READ M. J. Lasky's essay, "The Cycles of Western Fantasy" (ENCOUNTER, February), and consider it one of the most interesting and impressive arguments in recent years. But I have a problem with the text as it stands, and ask for clarification. On page 6 (col. 2) lines 15-18 are obviously not what you have written to be there. Unfortunately, these very same lines are confusingly repeated on page 7 (col. 1, lines 18-21), and there they appear to belong. Could you correct the garbled passage which, with the evidently pertinent footnote 9 thereto, doesn't really add up? As a matter of fact we want to translate your article into Greek for our Athens review, and we want to get it right: as page 6 stands, it is, if you will forgive the remark, "Greek" to us.

ZENOBIA DRAKOPOULOS

"Epopteia"
Athens

ED. NOTE: We regret the printer's garble of the passage on page 6, column 2. It was correct on the page proof, and with the mysteriously missing lines the end of the paragraph should have read:

"Utopias disappoint and Revolutions fail, yet still the pattern prevails. Our Western civilisation (as my thesis runs) has been formed by centuries of utopian hope and revolutionary faith, and the ideals of 1917 appear to be in the direct line of the grand purposes of 1776, 1789, and 1848. The Russian Revolution almost 'made it', and in the Western ideologised culture it seems to be only one small step—one turn or one thaw, one reform or one inspiring initiative—away from, at long last, getting on to the right progressive and humanist path."

The Real Faults of the Dutch

A Reply—By DIRK HORRINGA



MESSERS Daalder and Tromp ("Faults of the Dutch", ENCOUNTER, January 1988) seem to believe that the trouble is mainly caused by an insufficient intellectual level of political debate. However, from my observation (as a company chairman and business professor), I conclude that Holland is heading for a joint economic and cultural decline which cannot be prevented by some superficial improvement of the political process.

1. The Netherlands government prides itself on a stable guilder, and indus-

trial peace. But unemployment—at 14% the highest, most persistent, and socially destructive of all industrialised OECD countries—has stubbornly resisted all governmental remedies.

2. The single major cause of unemployment seems to be a huge collective sector, including 2 million public servants and 2 million social-security beneficiaries (in a population of 14.5 million)—the most numerous, the costliest, and possibly the most powerful public sector in the Western world.

3. Extremely high taxation, in order to support the public sector, is levied from private industry and from self-employed professionals, not unlike Sweden but even more oppressive. As a result, there is a tremendous international outflow of capital from Dutch companies and pension funds (at a rate of 21.5 billion guilders in 1986, the highest world-wide), leading to a great loss of investment and potential employment in the Netherlands.

4. At the same time the Dutch tax system is very unfriendly towards new, fast-growing, medium- and high-tech businesses. Of such new-founded companies, some 75% fail within five years, mostly because their equity formation (through excessive taxation) falls short of the increasing risks.

5. Consequently, employment in the private sector in Holland, as a percentage of total population, is now the lowest in the industrial world: one-third of Switzerland's, and one-half of Sweden's.

THE CONCLUSION is inescapable. The first condition for growing employment in the Netherlands is a substantial growth of the private sector. Instead of stagnation (a zero-growth forecast in 1988), a 5% yearly growth should be achieved, generally through a substantially lower tax and social security levy on business generally. More specifically, through a lower, simplified, and growth-rewarding tax régime for small and middle-sized new-tech companies.

In my view, bureaucratic, anti-business attitudes in the public sector must be held responsible, even more than taxation, for the decline of the private sector and the resulting loss of employment.

The level of technical education and technological research at State-controlled Dutch universities has fallen behind that of comparable European countries (Switzerland, Sweden). New scientific developments with important social and economic effects (information technology, biotechnology, the administration of large organisations) are vitally important to a country such as ours. However in the Netherlands all professors and "other ranks" teachers are civil servants, tightly controlled from the Ministry of Education's HQ as

to minutely standardised salaries, working conditions, and research funds.

As a result, the electronics multinational Philips has now withdrawn most of its research projects from Dutch universities, farming them out across the border in Belgium. In the area of "management education" Shell and other multinational companies are now favouring IMEDE (Switzerland) and other European business schools over their Dutch counterparts. In vital areas of development, like biotechnology, eminent scientists have fled the bureaucratic climate of academe; and their departments have been closed down.

Recently, an initiative, supported by 40 major Dutch companies, to create an independent, business-oriented "Informatics University" as an international centre of excellence had to be abandoned through bureaucratic obstruction.

The State-controlled education establishment in the Netherlands—following C. P. Snow's dictum that "it cannot be scientific if it has any practical use"—is directly responsible for serious academic arrears in technology and business administration. Indirectly it is responsible for the atrophy of the Dutch business sector, and for the worst unemployment situation of any industrialised country.

WHAT HOPE is there for new economic growth and the restoration of full employment in the Netherlands?

The public sector, representing two-thirds of the electorate, spread out over all major parties, knows that its income depends, ultimately, on taxes levied from private business. Every government proposal, so far, for increased employment through milder taxation of the private sector has been greeted by howls of "robbing the poor to give to the rich". Equally, every plan for business-directed education and research is described as an unscrupulous "sell-out to Capitalism".

If the Netherlands are to recover from irreversible economic decline and socially destructive unemployment, we need more than "intelligent political debate", as proposed by Hans Daalder and Bart Tromp. We need well-informed and courageous political leadership at all points of the political compass!

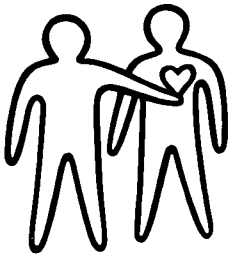
I suspect that to our Prime Minister, Ruud Lubbers, the dislodging of an entrenched, self-protecting bureaucracy poses no less a problem than Mr Gorbachov's.

DIRK HORRINGA

Amsterdam

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Life & Letters Today



FRENCH SEX: In the handbook of international clichés, the French are generally supposed to be the champions at "l'amour". A public opinion poll explodes this particular piece of received wisdom. It tells us that nearly one Frenchman in four finds sex "boring", and not just boring in theory, but boring while it is happening.

The survey, by the respected polling organisation SOFRES, reveals that those with the most active sex lives find it less boring than those with the least active. Well, that is more or less what one would expect. And yet of those who make love every day, there are still 13% who find it sometimes or often boring.

Discussing the survey, a French doctor immediately predicted that sex was likely to be most boring to the intellectual classes. And so it turns out. Over a third of those with an intellectual profession are sometimes subject to "l'ennui" during "l'amour", but only 15% of farmers are so afflicted.

More surprising is the revelation that sex is apparently a much more rewarding activity to those on the Right of the political spectrum than to those on the Left. Among the French Communists, 29% find love-making boring. But among Gaullists the figure falls to 18%.

FINANCIAL TIMES

ALCOHOLIC GLASS-NOST: In a report on my visit to the Reform Club [writes Gennady Gerasimov, Mr Gorbachov's spokesman], your Correspondent mentioned "two pints of the best bitter the club could provide" which I used to warm up to his questions. If my memory doesn't fail me I had three pints (if not four). As Oscar Wilde has wisely mentioned, the best way to resist the temptation is to yield to it.

There are other inaccuracies in your reporter's story but this one was too fundamental for me not to mention.

THE TIMES

RIGHT TRACK: Presumably to help those with limited intelligence, British Rail has a notice at Blackfriars station in London which says:

"The Underground is down the stairs."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

SENSE & SENSUAL: Good television was David Dimbleby's confrontation with Mrs Thatcher on Panorama (BBC 1). We were treated to an earful of unintended irony.

Dimbleby was game for a scrap but he went down in the first round to Mrs T. who proceeded to stomp him into the ground with Ciceronian rhetoric.

If Dimbleby paid more attention to his diction he might have stood a better chance. Anyone who can ask Mrs Thatcher with a straight face if she was in danger of becoming a "sensualist" must expect the expression that greeted the question.

"A what?", she queried, as if he had just asked her for a date. Glorious.

LONDON EVENING STANDARD

KNOWLEDGE: The old bow tie may be crumpled, but it hasn't changed its spots. Woodrow Wyatt (former Labour M.P. and Minister) sips champagne on a roof garden in Putney and talks about helping the masses.

Remember his answer when challenged that he didn't know the working classes?

"Yes I do", came the famous retort. "I employ them."

SUNDAY TIMES

IMAGINARY MUSEUM: Having noticed that there is no museum of international stature in its area, Dartford Council has decided to build one itself. It has the site. It has the money. All it lacks are contents. It is therefore now advertising for a collection. Almost any collection will do. "We are totally open-minded", says a spokesperson.

THE TIMES

CENSOR & BOUNCER: There was a chance to see at first hand what censorship was all about when Vanessa Redgrave's Marxist Party held a public meeting to discuss the issue.

The Observer's man on the spot, duly taking down what the chairman, Corin Redgrave, had to say about the threats to Press freedom, was asked tersely what he was doing.

After he had accounted for himself, Corin (who also happens to be Vanessa's brother) decided our man would be best ejected from the meeting at London's Young Vic Theatre and a bouncer was ordered in.

"It is a public meeting, but we have the right to decide what members of the public we want—and we don't want journalists", stormed Corin, before resuming his heartfelt appeal for Press freedom.

THE OBSERVER

HIT & MISS: Four times a year, in a slim volume entitled "UK Airmiss Statistics", the Civil Aviation Authority reveals as much as it ever will about how close many of us have come to sudden death in the skies above Britain.

The last quarterly figures show four commercial aircraft were involved in "risk-bearing near misses". British Airways rarely confirms that one of its aircraft has been involved in a near-miss.

Near-miss has long been a misnomer. Logic demands the term "near-hit".

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH



SUMMER QUIZ: If by chance we should be planning to spend the rest of this summer reading 19th-century English novels, do we understand [writes Christopher Lehmann-Haupt] the meanings of such topographical items as "strand, shingle, bight, glade, copse, grove, moor, heath, fen, sward, lea, swale, vale, dale, glen, downs, weld, tor, tarn, mere, rill, wier, croft, stile, thorp, chase, hedgerow, shire, bower, gazebo, and ha-ha? . . ."

NEW YORK TIMES



Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe

JAMES A. BRUNDAGE

In this monumental study, Brundage makes it strikingly clear that modern sex law and its myriad social and ethical ramifications derive from the system of sexual control in a world we have half forgotten. In a sweeping history of legal doctrines—from 500 A.D. to 1500—he concentrates on canon law. He traces the transition from the formulation of theories about permissible sexual conduct to the development by Church courts of workable mechanisms to enforce control and hence to the civil government's assuming regulation, particularly of nonmarital and extramarital relationships. "I know of no better introduction to the influence of cultural forces upon concepts and attitudes about sex. It will be a strong weapon in the hands of those interested in changing institutional attitudes about human sexuality."—Vern L. Bullough, State University College at Buffalo
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